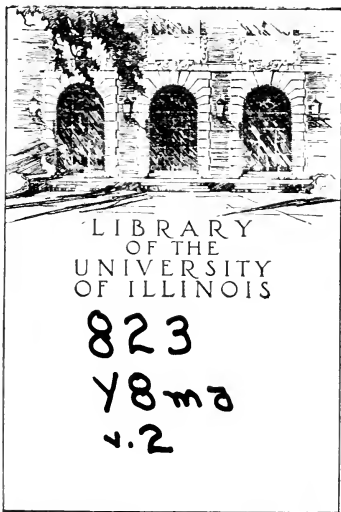




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MAGNUM BONUM

OR

MOTHER CAREY'S BROOD

BY

CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

AUTHOR OF 'THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE' ETC.

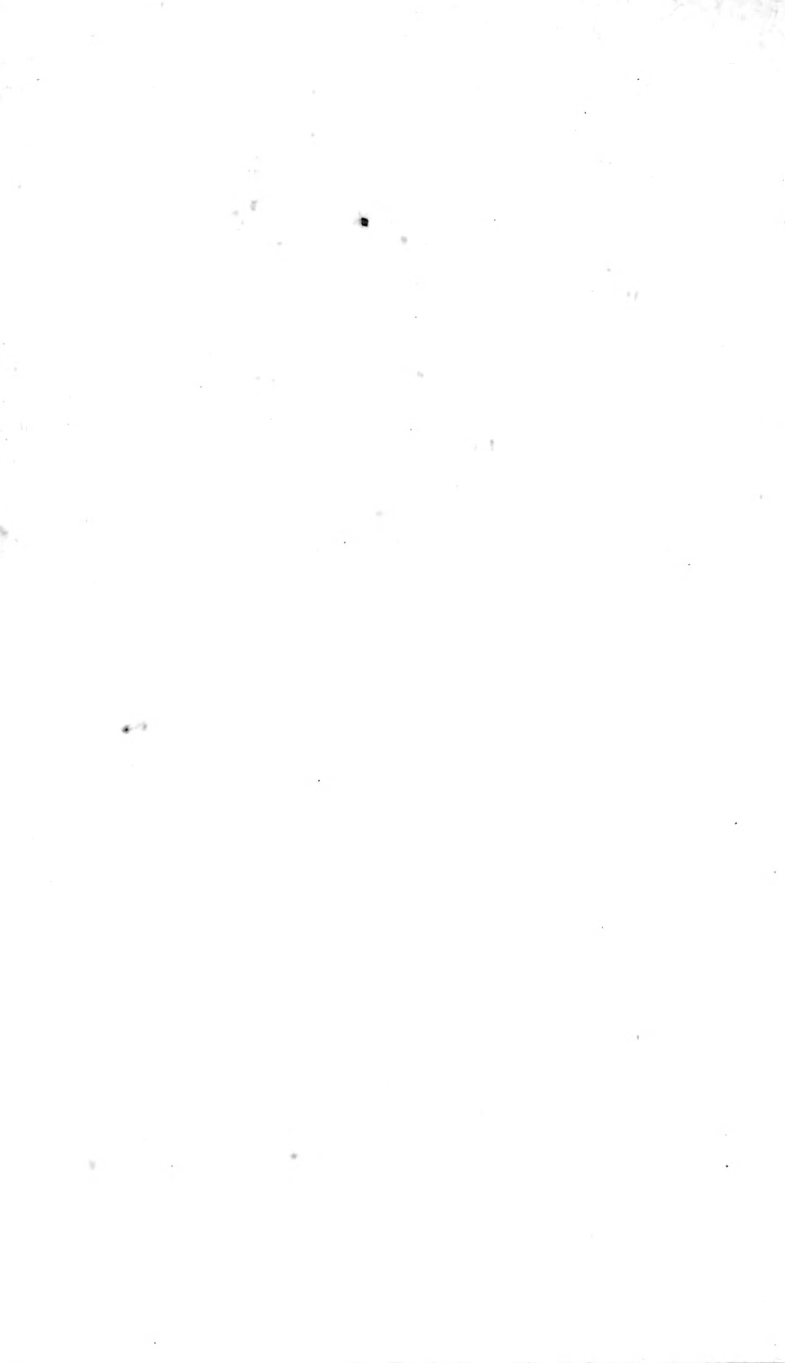
IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1879



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MAGNUM BONUM;

OR,

MOTHER CAREY'S BROOD.



CHAPTER XVII.

POPINJAY PARLOUR.

Happiest of all, in that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed.

Merchant of Venice.

“IT is our melancholy duty to record the demise of James Barnes, Esq., which took place at his residence at Belforest Park, near Kenminster, on the 20th of December. The lamented gentleman had long been in failing health, and an attack of paralysis, which took place on the 19th, terminated fatally. The vast property which the deceased had accumulated, chiefly by steamboat and railway speculations in the West Indies, rendered him one of the richest proprietors in the county. We understand that the entire fortune is bequeathed solely to his grand-niece, Mrs. Caroline Otway Brownlow, widow of the late Joseph Brownlow, Esq., and at present resident in the Pagoda, Ken-

minster Hill. Her eldest son, Allen Brownlow, Esq., is being educated at Eton."

That was the paragraph which David Ogilvie placed before the eyes of his sister in a newspaper lent to him in the train by a courteous fellow-traveller.

"Poor Caroline !" said Mary.

They said no more till the next day, when, after the English service at Florence, they were strolling together towards San Miniato, and feeling themselves entirely alone.

"I wonder whether this is true," began Mary at last.

"Why not true ?"

"I thought Mr. Barnes had threatened the boys that they should remember the Midas escapade."

"It must have been only a threat. It could only lie between her and the Spanish child ; and, if report be true, even the half would be an enormous fortune."

"Will it be fortune or misfortune, I wonder ?"

"At any rate, it puts an end to my chances of being of any service to her. Be it the half or the whole, she is equally beyond my reach."

"As she was before."

"Don't misinterpret me, Mary. I mean out of reach of helping her in any way. I was of little use to her before. I could not save little Armine from those brutal bullies, and never suspected the abuse that engulfed Bobus. I am not fit for a schoolmaster."

"To tell the truth, I doubt whether you have enough high spirits or geniality."

"That's the very thing! I can't get into the boys, or prevent their thinking me a Don. I had hoped there was improvement, but the revelations of this half-year have convinced me that I knew just nothing at all about it."

"Have you thought what you will do?"

"As soon as I get home, I shall send in my notice of resignation at Midsummer. That will see out her last boy, if he stays even so long."

"And then?"

"I shall go for a year to a theological college, and test my fitness to offer myself for Holy Orders."

A look of satisfaction on his sister's part made him add, "Perhaps you were disappointed that I was not ordained on my fellowship seven years ago."

"Certainly I was; but I was in Russia, and I thought you knew best, so I said nothing."

"You were right. You would only have heard what would have made you anxious. Not that there was much to alarm you, but it is not good for any one to be left so entirely without home-influences as I was all the time you spent abroad. I fell among a set of daring talkers, who thought themselves daring thinkers; and though the foundations were never disturbed with me, I was not disposed to bind myself more closely to what might not bear investigation, and I did

not like the aspect of clerical squabbles on minutiae. There was a tide against the life that carried me along with it, half from sound, half from unsound, motives, and I shrank from the restraint, outward and inward."

"Very likely it was wise, and the best thing in the end. But what has brought you to it?"

"I hope not as the resource of a shelved school-master."

"Oh, no ; you are not shelved. See how you have improved the school. Look at the numbers."

"That is no test of my real influence over the boys. I teach them, I keep them in external order, but I do not get into them. The religious life is at a low ebb."

"No wonder, with that vicar ; but you have done your best."

"Even if my attempts are a layman's best, they always get quenched by the cold water of the Rigby element. It is hard for boys to feel the reality of what is treated with such business-like indifference, and set forth so feebly, not to say absurdly."

"I know. It is a terrible disadvantage."

"Listening to Rigby, has, I must say, done a good deal to bring about my present intention."

"By force of contradiction."

"If that means of longing to be in his place and put the thing as it ought to be put."

"It is a contradiction in which I most sincerely rejoice, David," she said; "one of the wishes of my heart fulfilled when I had given it up."

"You do not know that it will be fulfilled."

"I think it will, though you are right to take time, in case the decision should be partly due to disappointment."

"If there can be disappointment where hope has never existed. But if a man finds he can't have his great good, it may make him look for the greater."

Mary sighed a mute and thankful acquiescence.

"The worst of it is about you, Mary. It is throwing you over just as you were coming to make me a home."

"Never mind, Davie. It is only deferred, and at any rate we can keep together till Midsummer. Then I can go out again for a year or two, and perhaps you will settle somewhere where the curate's sister could get a daily engagement."

The next day they found the following letter at the post office :—

"The Folly, Jan. 3rd.

"MY DEAR MARY,—I suppose you may have attained the blessed realms that lie beyond the borders of Gossip, and may not have heard the nine days' wonder that Belforest had descended on the Folly, and that poor old Mr. Barnes has left his whole property to me. My dear, it would be something

awful even if he had done his duty and halved it between Elvira and me, and he has ingeniously tied it up with trustees so as to make restitution impossible. As it is, my income will be not less than 40,000*l.* a year, and when divided among the children they will all be richer than perhaps is good for them.

“And now, my dear old dragon, will you come and keep me in order under the title of governess to Barbara and Elvira? For, of course, the child will go on living with us, and will have it made up to her as far as possible. You know that I shall do all manner of foolish things, but I think they will be rather fewer if you will only come and take me in hand. My trustees are the Colonel and an old solicitor, and will both look after the estate; but as for the rest, all that the Colonel can say is, that it is a frightful responsibility, and her Serene Highness is awe-struck. I could not have conceived that such a thing could have made so much difference in so really good a woman. Now I don't think you will be subject to gold dust in the eyes, and, I believe, you will still see the same little wild goose, or stormy petrel, that you used to bully at Bath, and will be even more willing to perform the process. As I should have begun by saying, on the very first evening Babie showed her sense by proposing you as governess, and you were unanimously elected in full and free parliament. It really was the child's

own thought and proposal, and what I want is to have those two children made wiser and better than I can make them, as well as that you should be the dear comrade and friend I need more than ever. You will see more of your brother than you could otherwise, for Belforest will be our chief home, and I need not say how welcome he will always be there. It is not habitable at present, so I mean to stay on in the Folly till Easter, and then give Janet the London lectures and classes she has been raving for these two years, and take Jessie also for music lessons, if she can be spared.

I'm afraid it is a come down for a finisher like you to condescend to my little Babie, but she is really worth teaching, and I would say, make your own terms, but that I am afraid you would not ask enough. Please let it be 150 \pounds , there's a good Mary! I think you would come if you knew what a relief it would be. Ever since that terrible August, two years and a half ago, I have felt as if I were drifting in an endless mist, with all the children depending on me, and nobody to take my hand and lead me. You are one of the straws I grasp at. Not very complimentary after all, but when I thought of the strong, warm, guiding hands that are gone, I could not put it otherwise. Do, Mary, come, I do need you so.

“Your affectionate

“C. O. BROWNLOW.”

"May I see it?" asked David.

"If you will; but I don't think it will do you any good. My poor Carey!"

"Few women would have written such a letter in all the first flush of wealth."

"No; there's great sweetness and humility and generosity in it, dear child."

"It changes the face of affairs."

"I'm engaged to you."

"Nonsense! As if that would stand in the way. Besides, she will be at Kenminster till Easter. You are not hesitating, Mary?"

"I don't think I am, and yet I believe I ought to do so."

"You are not imagining that I——"

"I was not thinking of you; but I am not certain that it would not be better for our old friendship if I did not accept the part poor Carey proposes to me. I might make myself more disagreeable than could be endured by forty thousand a year."

"You do yourself and her equal injustice."

"I shall settle nothing till I have seen her."

"Then you will be fixed," he said, in a tone of conviction.

So she expected, though believing that it would be the ruin of her pleasant old friendship. Her nineteen years of governess-ship had shown her more of the shady side of high life than was known to her brother

or her friend. She knew that, whatever the owner may be at the outset, it is the tendency of wealth and power to lead to arbitrariness and impatience of contradiction and censure, and to exact approval and adulation. Even if Caroline Brownlow's own nature should, at five-and-thirty, be too much confirmed in sweetness and generosity to succumb to such temptation, her children would only too probably resent any counter-influence, and set themselves against their mother's friend, and guide, under the title of governess. Moreover, Mary was too clear-sighted not to feel that there was a lack in the Brownlow household of what alone could give her confidence in the charming qualities of its mistress. Yet she knew that her brother would never forgive her for refusing, and that she should hardly forgive herself for following—not so much her better, as her more prudent, judgment. For she was infinitely touched and attracted by that warm-hearted letter, and could not bear to meet it with a refusal. She hoped, for a time at least, to be a comfort, and to make suggestions, with some chance of being attended to. Such aid seemed due from the old friendship at whatever peril thereto, and she would leave her final answer till she should see whether her friend's letter had been written only on the impulse of the moment, and half retracted immediately after.

The brother and sister crossed the Channel at night

and arrived at Kenminster at noon, on a miserably wet day. At the station they were met by Jock and a little yellow dog. His salutation, as he capped his master, was—

“Please, mother sent me up to see if you were come by this train, because if you’d come to early dinner, she would be glad, because there’s a builder or somebody coming with Uncle Robert about the repairs afterwards. Mother sent the carriage because of the rain. I say, isn’t it jolly cats and dogs?”

Mary was an old traveller, who could sleep anywhere, and had made her toilet on landing, so as to be fresh and ready ; but David was yellow and languid enough to add force to his virtuous resolution to take no advantage of the invitation, but leave his sister to settle her affairs her own way, thinking perhaps she might trust his future discretion the more for his present abstinence, so he went off in the omnibus. Jock, with the unfailing courtesy of the Brood, handed Miss Ogilvie into a large closed waggonet, explaining, “We have this for the present, and a couple of job horses ; but Uncle Robert is looking out for some real good ones, and ponies for all of us. I am going over with him to Woolmarston to-morrow to try some.”

It was said rather magnificently, and Mary answered, “You must be glad to get back into the Belforest grounds.”

“Ain’t we? It was just in time for the skating,”

said Jock. "Only the worst of it is, everybody will come to the lake, and so mother won't learn to skate. We thought we had found a jolly little place in the wood, where we could have had some fun with her, but they found it out, though we halloed as loud as ever we could to keep them off."

"Can your mother skate?"

"No, you see she never had a chance at home. Father was so busy, and we were so little; but she'd learn. Mother Carey can learn anything, if one could hinder her Serene Highness from pitching into her. I say, Miss Ogilvie, you'll give her leave to skate, won't you?" he asked in an insinuating tone.

"I give her leave!"

"She always says she'll ask you when we want her to be jolly and not mind her Serene Highness."

Mary avoided pledging herself, and Jock's attention was diverted to the dog, who was rising on his hind legs, vainly trying to look out of the window; and his history, told with great gusto by Jock, lasted till they reached home.

The drawing-room was full of girls about their lessons as usual—sums, exercises, music, and grammar all going on at once! but Caroline put an end to them, and sent the Kencroft party home at once in the carriage.

"So you have not dropped the old trade?" said Mary.

"I couldn't. Ellen is not strong enough yet to have the children on her hands all day. I said I'd be responsible for them till Easter, and I dare say you won't mind helping me through it as the beginning of everything. Will you condescend? You know I want to be your pupil too."

"You can be no one's pupil but your own, my dear! no one's on earth, I mean."

"Oh, don't! I know that, Mary. I'm trying and trying to be *their* pupil still. Indeed I am! It makes me patient of Robert, and his fearful responsibility, and his good little sister, to know that my husband always thought him right, and meant him to look after me. But as one lives on, those dear voices seem to get farther and farther away, as if one was drifting more out of reach in the fog. I do hate myself for it, but I can't help it."

"Is there not a voice that can never go out of reach, and that brings you nearer to them?"

"You dear old Piety, Prudence, and Charity all in one! That is if you have the charity to come and infuse a little of your piety and prudence into me. You know you could always make me mind you, and you'll make me—what is it that Mrs. Coffinkey says?—a credit to my position before you've done. I've had your room got ready; won't you come and take off your things?"

"I think, if you don't object, I had better sleep at

the schoolhouse, and come up here after David's breakfast."

"Very well; I won't try to rob him of you more than can be helped. Though you know he would be welcome here every evening if he liked."

"Thank you very much, I can help him more at home; but I'll come for the whole day, for I am sure you must have a great deal on your hands."

"Well! I've almost as many classes as pupils, and then there are so many interruptions. The Colonel is always bringing something to be signed, and then people will come and offer themselves, though I'm sure I never asked them. Yesterday there was a stupendous butler and house-steward who could also act as courier, and would do himself the honour of arranging my household in a truly ducal style. Just as I got rid of him, came a man with a future history of the landed gentry in quest of my coat of arms and genealogy, also three wine merchants, a landscape gardener, and a woman with a pitcher of gold fish. Emma is so soft she thinks everybody is a gentleman. I am trying to get the good old man-servant we had in our old home to come and defend me; not that he is old, for he was a boy whom Joe trained. Oh Mary, the bewilderment of it!" and she pushed back the little stray curly rings of hair on her forehead, while a peal at the bell was heard and a card was brought in. "Oh! Emma! don't bring me any more! Is it a gentleman?"

"Y—es, ma'am. Leastways it is a clergyman."

The clergyman turned out to be a Dissenting minister seeking subscriptions, and he was sent off with a sovereign.

"I know it was very weak," she said ; "but it was the only way to stop his mouth, and I must have time to talk to you, so don't begin your mission by scolding me."

Terms were settled ; Mary would remain at the schoolhouse, but daily come to the Pagoda till the removal to London, when her residence was to begin in earnest.

She took up her line from the first as governess, dropping her friend's Christian name, and causing her pupils to address herself as Miss Ogilvie, a formality which was evidently approved by Mrs. Robert Brownlow, and likewise by Janet.

That young lady was wonderfully improved by prosperity. She had lost her caustic manner and air of defiance, so that her cleverness and originality made her amusing instead of disagreeable. She piqued herself on taking her good fortune sensibly, and, though fully seventeen, professed not to know or care whether she was out or not, but threw herself into hard study, with a view to her classes, and gladly availed herself of Miss Ogilvie's knowledge of foreign languages.

Mrs. Coffinkey supposed that she would be presented at court with her dear mamma ; but she laughed at

courts and ceremonies, and her mother said that the first presentation in the family would be of Allen's wife when he was a member of parliament. But Janet was no longer at war with Kenminster. She laughed good-humouredly, and was not always struggling for self-assertion, since the humiliations of going about as the poor, plain cousin of the pretty Miss Brownlow were over. Now that she was the rich Miss Brownlow, she was not likely to feel that she was the plain one.

The sense of exile was over when the house in London was taken, and so Janet could afford to be kind to Kenminster ; and she was like the Janet of old times, without her slough of captious disdain. Even then there was a sense that the girl was not fathomed ; she never seemed to pour out her inner self, but only to talk from the surface, and certainly not to have any full confidence with her mother—nay, rather to hold her cheap.

Mary Ogilvie detected this disloyal spirit, and was at a loss whether to ascribe it to modern hatred of control, to the fact that Caroline had been in her old home more like the favourite child than the mother, or to her own eager naturalness of demeanour, and total lack of assumption. She was anything but weak, yet she could not be dignified, and was quite ready to laugh at herself with her children. Janet could hardly be overawed by a mother who had been challenged by her own gamekeeper creeping down a ditch, with the

two Johns, to see a wild duck on her nest, and with her hat half off, and her hair disordered by the bushes.

The "Folly" laughed till its sides ached at the adventure, and Caroline asked Mary if she were not longing to scold her.

"No, I think you will soon grow more cautious about getting into ridiculous positions."

"Isn't laughing a wholesome pastime?"

"Not when it is at those who ought to be looked up to."

"Oh! I'm not made to be looked up to. I'm not going to be a hero to my *valet de chambre*, or to anybody else, my dear, if that's what you want of me!"

Mary secretly hoped that a little more dignity would come in the London life, and was relieved when the time came for the move. The new abode was a charming house, with the park behind it, and the space between nearly all glass. Great ferns, tall citrons, fragrant shrubs, brilliant flowers, grew there; a stone-lined pool, with water-lilies above, gold-fish below, and a cool, sparkling, babbling fountain in the middle. There was an open space round it, with low chairs and tables, and the parrot on her perch. Indeed, Popinjay Parlour was the family title of this delightful abode; but it might almost as well have been called Mother Carey's bower. Here, after an audience with the house-keeper, who was even more overpowering than her Serene Highness, would Caroline retreat to write notes,

keep accounts, and hear Armine's lessons, secure before luncheon from all unnecessary interruption ; and here was her special afternoon and evening court.

This first summer she was free to take her own course as to society, for Janet cared for the Cambridge examination far more than for gaiety, and thus she had no call, and no heart for "going out," even if she had as yet been more known. Some morning calls were exchanged, but she sent refusals on mourning cards to invitations to evening parties, though she took her young people to plays, concerts, and operas, and all that was pleasant. Her young people included Jessie. Colonel and Mrs. Brownlow made her a visit as soon as she was settled, and were so much edified by the absence of display and extravagance, that they did not scruple to trust their daughter to her for the long-desired music-lessons.

Caroline had indeed made no attempt to win her way into the great world ; but she had brought together as much as possible of the old society of her former home. On two evenings in the week, the *habitués* of Joe Brownlow's house were secure of finding her either in the drawing-room or conservatory ; beautiful things, and new books and papers on the tables, good music on the piano, sometimes acted charades, or paper games, according to the humour or taste of the party. If she had been a beautiful duchess, Popinjay Parlour would have been a sort of *salon bleu* ; but it was really a kind

of paradise to a good many clever, hardworked men and women. Those of the upper world, such as Kenminster county folks, old acquaintances of her husband, or natural adherents of Midas, who found their way to these receptions, either thought them odd but charming, or else regretted that Mrs. Brownlow should get such queer people together, and turn Hyde Corner House into another Folly.

Mary Ogilvie enjoyed, but not without misgivings. It was delightful, and yet, what with Joe Brownlow and his mother had been guarded, might become less safe with no leader older or of more weight than Carey, who could easily be carried along by what they would have checked. The older and more intimate friends always acted as a wholesome restraint ; but when they were not present there was sometimes a tone that jarred on the reverent ear, or dealt with life and its mysteries in a sneering, mocking style. This was chiefly among new-comers, introduced by former acquaintances, and it never went far ; but Mary was distressed by seeing Janet's relish for such conversation. Nita Ray was the chief female offender in this way, and this was the more unfortunate as Sunday was her only free day.

Those Sundays vexed Mary's secret soul. No one interfered with her way of spending them ; but that was the very cause of misgiving. Everybody went to Church in the morning, but just where, and as, they pleased, meeting at luncheon, with odd anecdotes of

their adventures, and criticisms of music or of sermons. It was an easy-going meal, lasting long, and haunted by many acquaintances, for whose sake the table was always at its full length, and spread with varieties of delicacies that would endure waiting.

People dropped in, helped themselves, ate and drank, and then adjourned to Popinjay Parlour, where the afternoon was spent in an easy-going, loitering way, more like a foreign than an English Sunday. Miss Ogilvie used to go to the Litany at one of the Churches near ; Armine always came with her, and often brought Babie, and Jessie came too, as soon as that good girl had swallowed the fact that the Litany could stand alone.

Janet was apt to be walking with Nita, or else in some eager and amusing conversation in the conservatory ; and as to Elvira, she was the prettiest, most amusing plaything that Mrs. Brownlow's house afforded, a great favourite, and a continual study to the artist friends. Mary used to find her chattering, coquetting, and romping on coming in to the afternoon tea, which she herself would fain have missed ; but that her absence gave pain, and as much offence as one so kind as Mrs. Brownlow could take.

Carey argued that most of her guests were people who seldom had leisure to enjoy rest, conversation, and variety of pretty things, and that it would be mere Puritan crabbedness to deny them the pleasures of

Popinjay Parlour on the only day they could be happy there. It was not easy to answer the argument, though the strong feeling remained that it was not keeping Sunday as the true Lord's Day. While abstinence from such enjoyments created mere negative dulness, there must be something wrong.

Otherwise, Mary was on the happiest terms, made her own laws and duties, and was treated like a sister by Caroline, while the children were heartily fond of her, all except Elvira, who made a fierce struggle against her authority, and then, finding that it was all in vain, conformed as far as her innate idleness and excitability permitted.

She behaved better to Miss Ogilvie than to Janet, with whom she kept up a perpetual petty warfare, sometimes, Mary thought, with the pertinacity of a spiteful elf, making a noise when Janet wanted quiet, losing no opportunity of upsetting her books or papers, and laughing boisterously at any little mishap that befell her. The only reason she ever gave when pushed hard, was that "Janet was so ugly, she could not help it," a reason so utterly ridiculous, that there was no going any further.

Janet, on the whole, behaved much better under the annoyance than could have been expected. She entered enough into the state of affairs to see that the troublesome child could hardly be expelled, and she was too happy and too much amused to care much

about the annoyance. There was magnanimity enough about her not to mind midge bites, and certainly this summer was exceptionally delightful with all the pleasures of wealth, and very few of its drawbacks.

By the time the holidays were coming round, Belforest was not half habitable, and they had to return to the Pagoda. A tenant had been found for it, and such of the old furniture as was too precious to be parted with was to be removed to Belforest. Things were sufficiently advanced there for the rooms to be chosen, and orders given as to the decoration and furniture, and then, gathering up her sons, Caroline meant to start for the Rhine, Switzerland, and Italy. Old nurse was settled in a small pair of rooms, with Emma to wait on her, and promises from Jessie to attend to her comforts ; but the old woman had failed so much in their absence, and had fretted so much after "Mrs. Joseph" and the children, that it was hard to leave her again.

Everything that good taste and wealth could do to make a place delightful was at work. The "butcher's shop" was relegated to a dim corner of the gallery, and its place supplied from the brushes of the artists whom Caroline viewed with loving respect ; the drawing-room was renovated, a forlorn old library resuscitated into vigorous life, a museum fitted with shelves, drawers, and glass cases which Caroline said would be as dangerous to the vigorous spirit of natural history as

new clothes to a Brownie, and a billiard and gun room were ceded to the representations of Allen, who comported himself as befitted the son and heir.

Caroline would not part with her room-mate, little Barbara, and was to have for herself a charming bedroom and dressing-room, with a balcony and parapet overlooking the garden and park, and a tiny room besides, for Babie to call her own.

Janet chose the apartments which had been Mr. Barnes', and which being in the oldest part of the house, and wainscoted with dark oak, she could take possession of at once. There was one room down stairs with very ugly caryatides, supporting the wooden mantelpiece, and dividing the panels, one of which had a secret door leading by an odd little stair to the bedroom above—that in which Mr. Barnes had died.

It had of course another door opening into the corridor, and it was on these rooms that Janet set her affections. To the general surprise, Elvira declared that this was the very room she had chosen, with the red velvet curtains and gold crown, the day they went over the house, and that Mother Carey had promised it to her, and she *would* have it.

No one could remember any such promise, and the curtains of crimson moreen did not answer Elfie's description ; but she would not be denied, and actually put all her possessions into the room.

Janet, without a word, quietly turned them out into

the passage, and Elfie flew into one of those furious kicking and screaming passions which always ended in her being sent to bed. Caroline felt quite shaken by it, but stood firm, though, as she said, it went to her heart to deny the child who ought to have had equal shares with herself, and she would have been thankful if Janet would have given way.

Of this, however, Janet had no thoughts, strong in the conviction that the child could not make the same reasonable use of the fittings of the room as she could herself, and by no means disposed not "to seek her own.";

She had numerous papers, notes of lectures, returned essays from her society, and the like to dispose of, and she rejoiced in placing them in the compartments of the great bureau, in the lower room. The lawyers had cleared all before her, and the space was delightful. All personals must have been carried off by the servants as perquisites, for she found no traces of the former occupant till she came to a little bed-side table. The drawer was not locked, but did not open without difficulty, being choked with notes and letters in envelopes, directed to J. Barnes, Esquire. This perhaps accounted for the drawer not having been observed and emptied. Janet shook the contents out into a basket, and was going to take them to her uncle, but thought it could do no harm first to see whether there were anything curious or interesting in them.

Several were receipted bills ; but then she came to her mother's handwriting, and read her conciliatory note, which whetted her curiosity ; and looking further she got some amusement out of the polite notes and offers of service, claims to old family friendship, and congratulations which had greeted Mr. Barnes, and he had treated with grim disregard.

Presently, thrust into an envelope with another letter, and written on a piece of note-paper, was something that made her start as if at the sting of a viper. No ! it could not be a will ! She knew what wills were like. They were sheets of foolscap, written by lawyers, while this was only an old man's cramped and crooked writing. Perhaps, when he was in a rage, he had so far carried out his threat, that Allen should remember King Midas as to make a rough draft of a will, leaving everything to Elvira de Menella, for there at the top was the date, plainly visible, the very April when the confession had been made. But no doubt he had never carried out his purpose so far as to get it legally drawn out and attested. As Mr. Richards had said, he had never been in health to take any active measures, and probably he had rested satisfied with this relief to his feelings.

Should she show it to her mother and uncle, and let them know their narrow escape ? No. Mother Carey and Allen made quite fuss enough already

about that little vixen, and if they discovered how nearly she had been the sole heiress, they would be far worse. Besides, her mother might have misgivings, as to this unhappy document being morally, though not legally, binding. Suppose she were seized with a fit of generosity, and gave all up! or even half. Elfie, the little shrew, to have equal rights! The sweets of wealth only just tasted to be resigned, and the child, overweening enough already, to be set in their newly-gained place!

The sagacity of seventeen decided that mother had better not be worried about it for her own sake, and that of everyone else. So what was to be done. No means of burning it were at hand, and to ask for them might excite suspicion. The safest way was to place it in one of the drawers of the bureau, lock it up, and keep the key.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN OFFER FOR MAGNUM BONUM.

They had gold and gold and gold without end,
Gold to lay by and gold to spend,
Gold to give and gold to lend,
And reversions of gold in futuro.
In gold his family revelled and rolled,
Himself and his wife and his sons so bold,
And his daughters who sang to their harps of gold
O bella età dell' oro.

FOUR years of wealth had not made much external alteration in Mrs. Joseph Brownlow. As she descended the staircase of her beautiful London house, one Monday morning, late in April, between flower-stands filled with lovely ferns and graceful statues, she had still the same eager girlish look. It was true that her little cap was of the most costly lace, her hair manipulated by skilful hands, and her thin black summer dress was of material and make such as a scientific eye alone could have valued in their simplicity. But dignity still was wanting. Silks and brocades that would stand alone, and velvets richly piled only crushed and suffocated the little light swift figure, and the crisp curly hair was so much too wilful for the maid, that she had been even told that madame's style would be to cut it short, and wear it *à l'ingénue*, which she viewed as insulting ; and altogether her general air

was precisely what it had been when her dress cost a twentieth part of what it did at present.

Her face looked no older. It was thin, eager, bright, and sunny, yet with an indescribable wistfulness in the sparkling eyes, and something worn in the expression, and, as usual, she moved with a quiet nimbleness peculiar to herself.

The breakfast-table, sparkling with silver and glass, around a magnificent orchid in the centre, and a rose by every plate, was spread in the dining-room, sweet sounds and scents coming in through the widely-opened glass doors of the conservatory, while a bright wood fire, still pleasant to look at, shone in the grate.

As she rang the bell, Bobus came in from the conservatory, book in hand, to receive the morning kiss, for which he had to bend to his little mother. He was not tall, but he had attained his full height, and had a well-knit sturdy figure which, together with his heavy brow and deep-set eyes, made him appear older than his real age—nineteen. His hair and upper lip were dark, and his eyes keen with a sense of ready power and strong will.

"Good morning, Bobus ; I didn't see you all day yesterday," said his mother.

"No, I couldn't find you before you went out on Saturday night, to tell you I was going to run down to Belforest with Bauerson. I wanted to enlighten his mind as to wild hyacinths. They are in splendid bloom all over the copses, and I thought he would

have gone down on his knees to them, like Linnæus to the gorse."

"I'm afraid he didn't go on his knees to anything else."

"Well, it is not much in his line."

"Then can he be a nice Sunday companion?"

"Now, mother, I expected credit for not scandalising the natives. We got out at Woodgate, and walked over, quite 'unknownst,' to Kenminster."

"I was not thinking of the natives, but of yourself."

"As you are a sensible woman, Mother Carey, wasn't it a more goodly and edifying thing to put a man like Bauerson in a trance over the bluebells, than to sit cramped up in foul air listening to the glorification of a wholesale massacre."

"For shame, Bobus; you know I never allow you to say such things."

"Then you should not drag me to Church. Was it last Sunday that I was comparing the Prussians at Bazeille with——"

"Hush, my dear boy, you frighten me; you know it is all explained. Fancy, if we had to deal with a nation of Thugs, and no means of guarding them—a different dispensation and all. But here come the children, so hush."

Bobus gave a nod and smile, which his mother understood only too well as intimating acquiescence with wishes which he deemed feminine and conventional.

"My poor boy," she said to herself, with vague alarm

and terror, "what has he not picked up? I must read up these things, and be able to talk it over with him by the time he comes back from Norway."

There, however, came the morning greeting of Elvira and Barbara, girls of fourteen and eleven, with floating hair and short dresses, the one growing up into all the splendid beauty of her early promise, the other thin and brown, but with a speaking face and lovely eyes. They were followed by Miss Ogilvie, as trim and self-possessed as ever, but with more ease and expansiveness of manner.

"So Babie," said her brother, "you've earned your breakfast; I heard you hammering away."

"Like a nuthatch," was the merry answer.

"And Elfie?" asked Mrs. Brownlow.

"I'm not so late as Janet," she answered; and the others laughed at the self-defence before the attack.

"It is a lazy little Elf in town," said Miss Ogilvie; "in the country she is up and out at impossible hours."

"Good morning, Janet," said Bobus, at that moment, "or rather, 'Marry come up, mistress mine, good lack, nothing is lacking to thee save a pointed hood graceless.'"

For Janet was arrayed in a close-fitting pale blue dress, cut in semblance of an ancient kirtle, and with a huge chatelaine, from which massive chains dangled, not to say clattered—not merely the ordinary appendages of a young lady, but a pair of compasses, a safety inkstand, and a microscope. Her dark hair

was strained back from a face not calculated to bear exposure, and was wound round a silver arrow.

Elfie shook with laughter, murmuring—

“Oh dear ! what a fright !” in accents which Miss Ogilvie tried to hush ; while Babie observed, as a sort of excuse, “Janet always is a figure of fun when she is picturesque.”

“My dear, I hope you are not going to show yourself to any one in that dress,” added her mother.

“It is perfectly correct,” said Janet, “studied from an old Italian costume.”

“The Marchioness of Carabbas, in my old fairy-tale book. Oh, yes, I see !” and Babie went off again in an ecstatic fit of laughter.

“I hope you’ve got boots and a tail ready for George,” added Bobus. “Being a tiger already, he may serve as cat.”

Therewith the post came in, and broke up the discourse ; for Babie had a letter from Eton, from Armine who was shut up with a sore throat.”

Her mother was less happy. She had asked a holiday for the next day for her two Eton boys and their cousin John, and the reply had been that though for two of the party there could be no objection, her elder boy was under punishment for one of the wild escapades to which he was too apt to pervert his excellent abilities.

“Are not they coming, mother ?” asked Babie. “Armie does not say.”

"Unfortunately Jock has got kept in again."

"Poor Jock!" said Bobus; "sixpence a day, and no expectations, would have been better pasture for his brains."

"Yes," said his mother with a sigh, "I doubt if we are any of us much the better or the wiser for Belforest."

"The wiser, I'm sure, because we've got Miss Ogilvie," cried Babie.

"Do I hear babes uttering the words of wisdom?" asked Allen, coming into the room, and pretending to pull her hair, as the school-room party rose from the breakfast-table, and he met them with outstretched hands.

"Ay, to despise Lag-last," said Elvira, darting out of his reach, and tossing her dark locks at him as she hid behind a fern plant in the window; and there was a laughing scuffle, ended by Miss Ogilvie, who swept the children away to the school-room, while Allen came to the table, where his mother had poured out his coffee, and still waited to preside over his breakfast, though she had long finished her own.

Allen Brownlow, at twenty, was emphatically the Eton and Christchurch production, just well made and good-looking enough to do full justice to his training and general getting up, without too much individual personality of his own. He looked only so much of a man as was needful for looking a perfect gentleman, and his dress and equipments were in the most perfect

quietly exquisite style, as costly as possible, yet with no display, and nothing to catch the eye.

"Well, Bobus," he said, "you made out your expedition. How did the place look?"

"Wasting its sweetness," said his mother; "it is tantalising to think of it."

"It could hardly be said to be wasted," said Bobus; "the natives were disporting themselves all over it."

"Where?" asked Allen, with displeased animation.

"O, Essie and Ellie were promenading a select party about the gardens. I could almost hear Mackintyre gnashing his teeth at their inroads on the forced strawberries, and the park and Elmwood Spinney were dotted so thick with people, that we had to look sharp not to fall in with any one."

"Elmwood Spinney!" exclaimed Allen; "you don't mean that they were running riot over the preserves?"

"I don't think there were more than half-a-dozen there. Bauerson was quite edified. He said, 'So! they had on your English Sunday quite falsely me informed.' There were a couple of lovers spooning and some children gathering flowers, and it had just the Arcadian look dear to the German eye."

"Children," cried Allen, as if they were vipers. "That's just what I told you, mother. If you will persist in throwing open the park, we shall not have a pheasant on the place."

"My dear boy, I have seen them running about like chickens in a farmyard."

"Yes, but what's the use, if all the little beggars in Kenminster are to be let in to make them wild! And when you knew I particularly wished to have something worth asking Prince Siegfried down to."

"Never mind, Allen," put in Janet; "you can ask him to shoot into the poultry yard. The poor things are just as thick there, and rather tamer, so the sport will be the more noble."

"You know nothing about it, Janet," said Allen, in displeasure.

"But Allen," said his mother, apologetically, though she felt with Janet, "the woods are locked up."

"Locked! As if that was any use when you let a lot of boys come marauding all over the place!"

"Really, Allen," said his mother, "when I remember what we used to say about old Mr. Barnes, I cannot find it in my heart to play the same game!"

"It is quite a different thing."

"How?"

"He did it out of mere surliness."

"I don't suppose it makes much difference to the excluded whether it is done out of mere surliness, or for the sake of the preserves."

"Mother!" Allen spoke as if the absurdity of the argument were quite too much for him; but his brother and sister both laughed, which nettled him into adding—

"Well! All I have to say is, that if Belforest is to be nothing but a people's park for all the ragamuffins

in Kenminster, there will soon not be a head of game in the place, and I shall be obliged to shoot elsewhere !”

Poor Caroline ! If there was a thing she specially hated, it was a *battue*, both for the thing itself, and all the previous preparation of preserving, and of prosecuting poachers ; and yet sons have their mothers so much in their power by that threat of staying away from home, that she could not help faltering, “ Oh, Allen, I’ll do my best, and tell the keepers to be very careful, and lock the gates of all the preserves.”

Allen saw she was vexed, and spoke more kindly, “ There, never mind, mother. It is more than can be expected that ladies should see things in a reasonable light.”

“ What is the reasonable light ? ” asked Bobus.

Allen did not choose to hear, regarding Bobus not indeed as a woman, but as something as little capable of appreciating his reason. It was Janet who took up the word. “ The reasonable light is that the enjoyment of the many should be sacrificed to the vanity of the few, viz., that all Kenminster should be confined to dusty roads all the year round in order that Allen may bring down the youngest son of the youngest son of a German prince for one day to fire amongst some hundreds of tame pheasants who come up expecting to be fed.”

“ Oh, yes,” said Allen, “ we all know that you are a regular out-and-out democrat, Janet.”

"I confess, without being a democrat," said his mother, "that I do wonder that you gentlemen, who wish the game laws to continue, should so work them as to be more aggravating than ever."

"It is a simple question of the rights of property," said Allen. "If I do a thing, I like it to be well done, and not half-and-half."

Caroline rose from the table, dreading, like many a mother, a regular skirmish about game-preserving, between those who cared to shoot, and those who did not. Like other ladies, she could never understand exaggerated preserving, nor why men who loved sport should care to have game multiplied and tamed so as apparently to spoil all the zest of the chase; but she had let Allen and his uncle do whatever they told her was right by the preserves, except shutting up the park and all the footpaths. Colonel Brownlow, whose sporting instincts were those of a former generation, was quite satisfied; Allen never would be so; and it was one of the few bones of contention in the family.

For Allen was walking through Oxford in a quiet, amiable way, not troubling himself more about study than to secure himself from an ignominious pluck, and doing whatever was supposed to be "good form."

His brother accused him of carrying his idolatry of "good form" to a snobbish extent, but Allen could carry it out so naturally that no one could have suspected that he had not been to the manner born.

If he did appreciate the society of people with handles to their names, he comported himself among them as their easy equal ; and he was so lavish as to be a very popular man. He had no vicious tastes or tendencies, and was too gentlemanly and quiet ever to come into collision with the authorities. At home, except when his notions of "good form" were at variance with strong opinions of his mother's, nothing could be more chivalrously deferential than his whole demeanour to her ; and the worst that could be said of him was that he managed to waste a large amount of time and money with very little to show for it. His profession was to be son and heir to a large fortune, and he took to the show part of the affair very kindly.

But was this being the man his father had expected him to be ? The thought would come across Caroline at times, but not very often, as she floated along easily in the stream of life. Most of the business troubles of her property were spared her by her trustees, and her income was so large that even Allen's expenditure had not yet been felt as an inconvenience. As to the responsibilities, she contributed largely to county subscriptions, gave her clergyman whatever he asked, provided Christmas treats and summer teas for their school-children, and permitted Miss Ogilvie and Babie to do whatever they pleased among the poor when they were at home. But she was not very much at Belforest. She generally came there at Midsummer and at Christmas, and filled the house with friends. All

kinds of amusements astonished the neighbourhood, and parties of the newest kinds, private theatricals, *tableaux*, charades, all that taste or ingenuity could devise were in vogue.

But before the spring east winds the party were generally gone to some more genial climate, and the early autumn was often spent in Switzerland. Pictures, art, and scenery were growing to be necessities of life, and to stay at home with no special diversion in view seemed unthought of. The season was spent in London, not dropping the artist society on the one hand, but adding to it the amount of intercourse into which she was drawn by the fact of her being a rich and charming woman, having a delightful house, and a son and daughter who might be "*grands partis*." Allen liked high life for her, so she did not refuse it; but probably her social success was all the greater from her entire indifference, and that of her daughter, to all the questions of exclusiveness and fashion. If they had been born duchesses they could not have been less concerned about obtaining invitations to what their maid called "the first circles," and they would sometimes reduce Allen to despair by giving the preference to a lively literary *soirée*, when he wanted them to show themselves among the aristocracy at a drum.

Engagements of all kinds grew on them with every season, and in this one especially, Caroline had grown somewhat weary of the endeavour to

satisfy both him and Janet, and was not sorry that her two eldest sons were starting on a yacht voyage to Norway, where Allen meant to fish, and Bobus to study natural history. She had her interview with the housekeeper, and proceeded to her own place in Popinjay Parlour, a quiet place at this time of day, save for the tinkling of the fountain and the twitterings of the many little songsters in the aviary, whom the original parrot used patronisingly to address as "Pretty little birds."

Janet was wandering about among the flowers, evidently waiting for her, and began, as she came in—

"I wanted to speak to you, mother."

"Well, Janet," said Caroline, reviewing in one moment every unmarried man, likely or unlikely, who had approached the girl, and with a despairing conviction that it would be some one very unlikely indeed !

"You know I am of age, mother."

"Certainly. We drank your health last Monday."

"I made up my mind that till I was of age I would go on studying, and at the same time see something of the world and of society."

"Certainly," said Caroline, wondering what her inscrutable daughter was coming to.

"And having done this, I wish to devote myself to the study of medicine."

"Be a lady doctor, Janet !"

"Mother, you are surely above all the commonplace, old world nonsense !"

"I don't think I am, Janet. I don't think your father would have wished it."

"He would have gone on with the spirit of the times, mother ; men do, while women stand still."

"I don't think he would in this."

"I think he would, if he knew me, and the issues and stake, and how his other children are failing him."

"Janet!"—and the colour flushed into her mother's face—"I don't quite know what you mean ; but it is time we came to an understanding."

"I think so," returned Janet.

"Then you know——"

"I heard what papa said to you. I kept the white slate till you thought of it," said Janet, in a tone that sounded soft from her.

"And why did you never say so, my dear?"

"I can hardly tell. I was shy at first ; and then reserve grows on a person ; but I never ceased from thinking about it through all these years. Mother, you do not think there is any chance of the boys taking it up as my father wished?"

"Certainly not Allen," said Caroline with a sigh. "And as to Bobus, he would have full capacity ; but a great change must come over him, poor fellow, before he would fulfil your father's conditions."

"He has no notion of the drudgery of the medical profession," said Janet ; "he means to read law, get up social and sanitary questions, and go into parliament."

"I know," said her mother, "I have always lived in

hopes that sanitary theories would give him his father's heart for the sufferers, and that search into the secrets of nature would lead him higher ; but as long as he does not turn that way of himself it would be contrary to your father's charge to hold this discovery out to him as an inducement."

"And Jock?" said Janet, smiling. "You don't expect it of the born soldier—nor of Armine?"

"I am not sure about Armine, though he may not be strong enough to bear the application."

"Armine will walk through life like Allen," scornfully said Janet ; "besides he is but fourteen. Now, mother, why should not I be worthy?"

"My dear Janet, it is not a question of worthiness ; it is not a thing a woman could work out."

"I do not ask you to give it to me now, nor even to promise it to me," said Janet, with a light in those dark wells, her eyes ; "but only to let me have the hope, that when in three years' time I am qualified, and have passed the examinations, if Bobus does not take it up, you will let me claim that best inheritance my father left, but which his sons do not heed."

"My child, you do not know what you ask. Remember, I know more about it than only what you picked up on that morning. It is a matter he could not have made sure of without a succession of experiments very hard even for him, and certainly quite impossible for any woman. The exceeding difficulty and danger of the proof was one reason of his guarding

it so much, and desiring it should only be told to one good as well as clever—clever as well as good.”

“Can you give me no hint of the kind of thing,” said Janet, wistfully.

“That would be a betrayal of his trust.”

Janet looked terribly disappointed.

“Mother,” said she, “let me put it to you. Is it fair to shut up a discovery that might benefit so many people.”

“It is not his fault, Janet, that it is shut up. He talked of it to several of the most able men he was connected with, and they thought it a chimera. He could not carry it on far enough to convince them. I do not know what he would have done if his illness had been longer, or he could have talked it out with any one, but I know the proof could only be made out by a course of experiments which he could not commit to any one not highly qualified, or whom he could not entirely trust. It is not a thing to be set forth broadcast, while it might yet prove a fallacy.”

“Is it to be lost for ever, then?”

“I shall try to find light as to the right thing to be done about it.”

“Well,” said Janet, drawing a long breath, “three years of study must come, any way, and by that time I may be able to triumph over prejudice.”

There was no time to reply, for at that moment the letters of the second delivery were brought in; and the first that Caroline opened told her that the cold which Armine had mentioned on Saturday seemed to

be developing into an attack of a rather severe hybrid kind of illness, between measles and scarlatina, from which many persons had lately been suffering.

Armine was never strong, and his illnesses were always a greater anxiety than those of other people, so that his mother came to the immediate decision of going to Eton that same afternoon and remaining there, unless she found that it had been a false alarm.

She did not find it so ; and as she remained with her boy, Janet's conversation with her could not be resumed. There was so much chance of infection that she could not see any of the family again. Both the Johns sickened as soon as Armine began to improve, and Miss Ogilvie took the three girls down to Belforest.

After the first few days it was rather a pleasant nursing. There was never any real alarm ; indeed, Armine was the least ill of the three, and Johnny the most, and each boy was perfectly delighted to have her to attend to him, her nephew almost touchingly grateful. The only other victim was Jock's most intimate friend, Cecil Evelyn, whose fag Armine was. He became a sharer of her attentions and the amusements she provided. She received letters of grateful thanks from his mother, who was, like herself, a widow, but was prevented from coming to him by close attendance on her mother-in-law, who was in a lingering state of decay when every day might be the last.

The eldest son, Lord Fordham, was so delicate that

he was on no account to be exposed to the infection, and the boys were exceedingly anxious that Cecil should join them in the expedition that their mother projected making with them, to air them in Switzerland before returning to the rest of the family. But Mrs. Evelyn (her husband had not lived to come to the title) declined this. Fordham was in the country with his tutor, and she wished Cecil to come and spend his quarantine with her in London before joining him. The boys grumbled very much, but Caroline could hardly wonder when she talked with their tutor.

He, like every one else, liked, and even loved personally that perplexing subject, John Lucas Brownlow, *alias* Jock. The boy was too generous, honourable, truthful, and kindly to be exposed to the stigma of removal, but he was the perplexity of everybody. He could not be convinced of any necessity for application, and considered a flogging as a slight risk quite worth encountering for the sake of diversion. He would execute the most audacious pranks, and if he was caught, would take it as a trial of skill between the masters and himself, and accept punishment as amends, with the most good humoured grace in the world. Fun seemed to be his only moving spring, and he led everybody along with him, so as to be a much more mischievous person than many a worse lad.

The only exceptions in the house to his influence seemed to be his brother and cousin. Both were far above the average boy. Armine, for talent, John

Friar Brownlow at once for industry and steadiness. They had stood out resolutely against more than one of his pranks, and had been the only boys in the house not present on the occasion of his last freak—a champagne supper, when parodies had been sung, caricaturing all the authorities ; and when the company had become uproarious enough to rouse the whole family, the boys were discovered in the midst of the most audacious but droll mimicry of the masters.

As to work, Jock was developing the utmost faculties for leaving it undone, trusting to his native facility for putting on the steam at any crisis ; and not believing in the warnings that he would fail in passing for the army.

What was to be done with him ? Was he to be taken away and sent to a tutor ? His mother consulted himself as he sat in his arm-chair.

“Like Rob !” he said, and made up a face.

“Rob is doing very well in the militia.”

“No ; don’t do that, mother ! Never fear, I’ll put on a spurt when the time comes !”

“I don’t believe a spurt will do. Now, seriously, Jock——”

“Don’t say, seriously, mother : it’s like H.S.H.

“Perhaps if I had been like her, you would not be vexing me so much now.”

“Come, come, mother, it’s nothing to be vexed about. My tutor needn’t have bothered you. I’ve done nothing sneaking nor ungentlemanly.”

"There is plenty of wrong without that, Jock. While you never heed anything but fun and amusement I do not see how you are to come to anything worth having; and you will soon get betrayed into something unworthy. Don't let me have to take you away in disgrace, my boy; it would break my heart."

"You sha'n't have to do that, mother."

"But don't you think it would be wiser to be somewhere with fewer inducements to idleness?"

"Leave Eton? O no, mother! I can't do that till the last day possible. I shall be in the eight another year."

"You will not be here another year unless you go on very differently. Your tutor will not allow it, if I would."

"Has he said so?"

"Yes; and the next half is to be the trial."

Jock applied himself to extracting a horsehair from the stuffing of the elbow of his chair; and there was a look over his face as near sullenness as ever came to his gay, careless nature.

Would he attend? or even could he?

When his bills came in Caroline feared, as before, that he was the one of all her children whom Belforest was most damaging. Allen was expensive, but in an elegant, exquisite kind of way; but Jock was simply reckless; and his pleasures were questionable enough to be on the borders of vices, which might change the frank, sweet, merry face that now looked up to

her into a countenance stained by dissipation and licence !

A flash of horror and dismay followed the thought ! But what could she do for him, or for any of her children ? Censure only alienated them and made them worse, and their love for her was at least one blessing. Why had this gold come to take away the wholesome necessity for industry ?

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SNOWY WINDING-SHEET.

Cold, cold, 'tis a chilly clime
That the youth in his journey hath reached ;
And he is aweary now,
And faint for lack of food.
Cold ! cold ! there is no sun in heaven.

Southey.

VERY merry was the party which arrived at the roughly-built hotel of Schwarenbach which serves as a half-way house to the Altels.

Never had expedition been more enjoyed than that of Mrs. Brownlow and her three boys. They had taken a week by the sea to recruit their forces, and then began their journey in earnest, since it was too late for a return to Eton, although so early in the season that to the Swiss they were like the first swallows of the spring, and they came in for some of the wondrous glory of the spring flowers, so often missed by tourists.

In her mountain dress, all state and ceremony cast aside, Caroline rode, walked, and climbed like the jolly Mother Carey she was, to use her son's favourite expression, and the boys, full of health and recovery,

gambolled about her, feeling her companionship the very crown of their enjoyment.

Johnny, to whom all was more absolutely new than to the others, was the quietest of the three. He was a year older than Lucas, as Jock was now called to formal outsiders, while Friar John, a reversal of his cousin's two Christian names, was a school title that sometimes passed into home use. Friar John then had reached an age open to the influences of beautiful and sublime scenery, and when the younger ones only felt the exhilaration of mountain air, and longings to get as high as possible, his soul began to expand, and fresh revelations of glory and majesty to take possession of him. He was a very different person from the rough, awkward lad of eight years back. He still had the somewhat loutish figure which, in his mother's family, was the shell of fine-looking men, and he was shy and bashful, but Eton polish had taken away the rude gruffness, and made his manners and bearing gentlemanly. His face was honest and intelligent, and he had a thoroughly good, conscientious disposition ; his character stood high, and he was the only Brownlow of them all who knew the sweets of being "sent up for good." His aunt could almost watch expression deepening on his open face, and he was enjoying with soul and mind even more than with body. Having had the illness later and more severely than the other two, his strength had not so fully returned, and he was often glad to rest, admire, and

study the subject with his aunt, to whose service he was specially devoted, while the other two climbed and explored. For even Armine had been invigorated with a sudden overflow of animal health and energy, which made him far more enterprising and less contemplative than he had ever been before.

They four had walked up the mountain after breakfast from Kandersteg, bringing their bags for a couple of nights, the boys being anxious to go up the Altels the next day, as their time was nearly over and they were to be in school in ten days' time again. After luncheon and a good rest on the wooden bench outside the door, they began to stroll towards the Daubensee, along a path between desolate boulders, without vegetation, except a small kind of monkshood.

"I call this dreary," said the mother. "We don't seem to get a bit nearer the lake. I shall go home and write to Babie."

"I'll come back with you," said Johnny. "My mother will be looking for a letter."

"Not giving in already, Johnny," said Armine. "I can tell you I mean to get to the lake."

"The Friar is the slave of his note-book," said Jock. "When are we to have it—'Craggs and Cousins,' or 'From Measles to Mountains'?"

"I don't want to forget everything," said Johnny, with true Kencroft doggedness.

"Do you expect ever to look at that precious diurnal again?"

"He will leave it as an heirloom to his grandchildren!"

"And they will say how slow people were in the nineteenth century."

"There will have been a reaction by that time, and they will only wonder how anybody cared to go up into such dreary places."

"Or perhaps they will have stripped them all, and eaten the glaciers up as ices and ice-creams!"

"I think I'll set up that as my pet anxiety," said their mother, laughing; "just as some people suffer from perplexity as to what is to become of the world when all the coal is used up! You are not turning on my account, are you, Johnny? I am quite happy to go back alone."

"No, indeed. I want to write my letter, and I have had enough," said John.

"Tired!" said Armine. "Poor old monk! Swiss air always makes me feel like a balloon full of gas. I could go on, up and up, for ever!"

"Well, keep to the path, and don't do anything imprudent," she said, turning back, the boys saying, "We'll only have a look down the pass! Here, Chico! Chico! Chick! Chick!"

Chico, the little dog so disdainfully rejected by Elvira, had attached himself from the first to Jock. He had been in the London house when they spent a day there, and in rapture at the meeting had smuggled himself, not without his master's connivance,

among the rugs and wrappers, and had already been the cause of numerous scrapes with officials and travellers, whence sometimes money, sometimes politeness, sometimes audacity, bought off his friends as best they could.

There was a sort of grave fascination in the exceeding sternness of the scene—the grey heaps of stone, the mountains raising their shining white summits against the blue, the dark, fathomless, lifeless lake, and the utter absence of all forms of life. Armine's spirit fell under the spell, and he moved dreamily on, hardly attending to Jock, who was running on with Chico, and alarming him by feints of catching him and throwing him into the water.

They came to the gap where they expected to look over the pass, but it was blotted out by a mist, not in itself visible though hiding everything, and they were turning to go home when, in the ravine near at hand, the white ruggedness of the Wildstrube glacier gleamed on their eyes.

"I didn't know it was so near," said Jock. "Come and have a look at it."

"Not on it," said Armine, who had somewhat more Swiss experience than his brother. "There's no going there without a guide."

"There's no reason we should not get on the moraine," said Jock; and they presently began to scramble about among the rocks and boulders, trying to mount some larger one whence they might get a

more general view of the form of the glacier. Chico ran on before them, stimulated by some reminiscence of the rabbit-holes of Belforest, and they were looking after him and whistling him back ; Armine heard a sudden cry and fall—Jock had disappeared. “Never mind !” he called up the next instant. “I’m all right. Only, come down here ! I’ve twisted my foot somehow.”

Armine scrambled round the rock over which he had fallen, a loose stone having turned with him. He had pulled himself up, but even with an arm round Armine’s neck, he could not have walked a step on even ground, far less on these rough *débris*, which were painful walking even for the lightest, most springy tread.

“You must get to the inn and bring help,” he said, sinking down with a sigh.

“I suppose there’s nothing else to be done,” said Armine, unwillingly. “You’ll have a terrible time to wait, unless I meet some one first. I’ll be as quick as I can.”

“Not too quick till you get off this place,” said Jock, “or you’ll be down too, and here, help me off with this boot first.”

This was not done quickly or easily. Jock was almost sick with the pain of the effort, and the bruise looked serious. Armine tried to make him comfortable, and set out, as he thought, in the right direction, but he had hardly gone twenty steps before he came

to a sudden standstill with an emphatic "I say!" then came back repeating "I say, Jock, we are close upon the glacier; I was as near as possible going down into an awful blue crack!"

"That's why it's getting so cold," said Jock. "Here, Chick, come and warm me. Well, Armie, why ain't you off?"

"Yes," said Armie, with a quiver in his voice, "if I keep down by the side of the glacier, I suppose I must come to the Daubensee in time."

"What! Have we lost the way?" said Jock, beginning to look alarmed.

"There's no doubt of that," said Armie, "and what's worse, that fog is coming up; but I've got my little compass here, and if I keep to the south-west, and down, I must strike the lake somewhere. Good-bye, Jock."

He looked white and braced up for the effort. Jock caught hold of him. "Don't leave me, Armie," he said; "you can't—you'll fall into one of those crevasses."

"You'd better let me go before the fog gets worse," said Armie.

"I say you can't; it's not fit for a little chap like you. If you fell it would be ever so much worse for us both."

"I know! But it is the less risk," said Armie, gravely.

"I tell you, Armie, I can't have you go. Mother

will send out for us, and we can make no end of a row together. There's a much better chance that way than alone. Don't go, I say——"

"I was only looking out beyond the rock. I don't think it would be possible to get on now. I can't see even the ridge of stones we climbed over."

"I wish it was I," said Jock, "I'll be bound I could manage it!" Then impatiently—"Something must be done, you know, Armie. We can't stay here all night."

Yet when Armine went a step or two to see whether there was any practicability of moving, he instantly called out against his attempting to go away. He was in a good deal of pain, and high-spirited boy as he was, was thoroughly unnerved and appalled, and much less able to consider than the usually quieter and more timid Armine. Suddenly there was a frightful thunderous roar and crash, and with a cry of "An avalanche," the brothers clasped one another fast and shut their eyes, but ere the words "Have mercy" were uttered all was still again, and they found themselves alive!

"I don't think it was an avalanche," said Armine, recovering first. "It was most likely to be a great mass of ice tumbling off the arch at the bottom of the glacier. They do make a most awful row. I've heard one before, only not so near. Any way we can't be far from the bottom of the glacier, if I only could crawl there."

"No, no ;" cried Jock, holding him tight ; "I tell you, you can't do it."

Jock could not have defined whether he was most actuated by fears for his brother's safety or by actual terror at being left alone and helpless. At any rate Armine much preferred remaining, in all the certain misery and danger, to losing sight of his brother, with the great probability of only being further lost himself.

"I wonder whether Chico would find mother," he said.

Jock brightened ; Armine found an envelope in his pocket, and scribbled—

"On the moraine. Jock's ankle sprained—Come."

Then Jock produced a bit of string, wherewith it was fastened to the dog's collar, and then authoritatively bade Chico go to mother.

Alas ! cleverness had never been Chico's strong point, and the present extremity did not inspire him with sagacity. He knew the way as little as his masters did, and would only dance about in an unmeaning way, and when ordered home crouch in abject entreaty. Jock grew impatient and threatened him, but this only made him creep behind Armine, put his tail between his legs, hold up his little paw, and look piteously imploring.

"There's no use in the little brute," sighed Jock at last, but the attempt had done him good and recalled his nerve and good sense.

"We are in for a night of it," he said, "unless they find us ; and how are they ever to do that in this beastly fog ?"

"We must halloo," said Armine, attempting it.

"Yes, and we don't know when to begin ! We can't go on all night, you know," said Jock ; "and if we begin too soon, we may have no voice left just at the right time."

"It is half-past seven now," said Armine, looking at his watch. "The food was to be at seven, so they must have missed us by this time."

"They won't think anything of it till it gets dark."

"No. Give them till half-past eight. Somewhere about nine or half-past it may be worth while to jodel."

"And how awfully cold it will be by that time. And my foot is aching like fun !"

Armine offered to rub it, and there was some occupation in this and in watching the darkening of the evening, which was very gradual in the dense white fog that shut them in with a damp, cold, moist curtain of undeveloped snow.

The poor lads were thinly clad for a summer walk, Jock had left his plaid behind him, and they were beginning to feel only too vividly that it was past supper-time, when they could dimly see that it was past nine, and began to shout, but they soon found this severe and exhausting.

Armine suggested counting ten between each cry, which would husband their powers and give them time to listen for an answer. Yet even thus there was an empty, feeble sound about their cries, so that Jock observed—

"It's very odd that when there's no good in making a row, one can make it fast enough, and now when it would be of some use, one seems to have no more voice than a little sick mouse."

"Not so much, I think," said Armine. "It is hunger partly."

"Hark! That sounded like something."

Invigorated by hope they shouted again, but though several times they did hear a distant jodel, the hope that it was in answer to themselves soon faded, as the sound became more distant, and their own exertions ended soon in an utter breakdown—into a hoarse squeak on Jock's part and a weak, hungry cry on Armine's. Jock's face was covered with tears, as much from the strain as from despair.

"There!" he sighed, "there's our last chance gone! We are in for a night of it."

"It can't be a very long night," Armine said, through chattering teeth. "It's only a week to the longest day."

"Much that will matter to us," said Jock, impatiently. "We shall be frozen long before morning."

"We must keep ourselves awake."

"You little ass," said poor Jock, in the petulant

inconsistency of his distress ; " it is not come to that yet."

Armine did not answer at once. He was kneeling against the rock, and a strange thrill came over Jock, forbidding him again to say—" It was not come to *that* ;" but a shoot of aching pain in his ankle presently drew forth an exclamation.

Armine again offered to rub it for him, and the two arranged themselves for this purpose, the curtain of damp woolliness seeming to thicken on them. There was a moon somewhere, and the darkness was not total, but the dreariness and isolation were the more felt from the absence of all outlines being manifest. They even lost sight of their own hands if they stretched out their arms, and their light summer garments were already saturated with damp and would soon freeze. No part of their bodies was free from that deadly chill save where they could press against one another.

They were brave boys. Jock had collected himself again, and for some time they kept up a show of mirth in the shakings and buffetings they bestowed on one another, but they began to grow too stiff and spent to pursue this discipline. Armine thought that the night must be nearly over, and Jock tried to see his watch, but decided that he could not, because he could not bear to believe how far it was from day.

Armine was drowsily rubbing the ankle, mechanically

murmuring something to himself. Jock shook him, saying—

“Take care, don't doze off. What are you mumbling about leisure?”

“O tarry thou the Lord's leisure. Be strong and —— Was I saying it aloud?” he broke off with a start.

“Yes; go on.”

Armine finished the verse, and Jock commented—

“Comfort thine heart. Does the little chap mean it in a fix like this?”

“Jock,” said Armine, now fully awake, “I *do* want to say something.”

“Cut on.”

“If you get out of this and I don't——”

“Stop that! We've got heat enough to last till morning.”

“Will they find us then? These fogs last for days and turn to snow.”

“Don't croak, I say. I can't face mother without you.”

“She'll be glad enough to get you. Please listen, Jock, while I'm awake. I want you to give her and all of them my love, and say I'm sorry for all the times I've vexed them.”

“As if you had ever——”

“And please, Jock—if I was nasty and conceited about the champagne——”

“Shut up, I can't stand this,” cried Jock, chiefly

from force of habit, for it was a tacit agreement among the elder brothers that Armine must not be suffered to "be cocky and humbug," by which they meant no implication on his sincerity, but that they did not choose to hear remonstrances or appeals to higher motives, and this had made him very reticent with all except his sister Barbara and Miss Ogilvie, but he now persisted.

"Indeed I want you to forgive me, Jock. You don't know how often I've thought all sorts of horridness about you."

Jock laughed, "Not more than I deserved, I'll be bound. How can you be so absurd! If anyone wants forgiveness, it is I. I say, Armie, this is all nonsense. You don't really think you are done for, or you would not take it so coolly."

"Of course I know Who can bring us through if He will," said Armine. "There's the Rock. I've been asking Him all this time—every moment—only I get so sleepy."

"If He will ; but if He won't ?"

"Then there's Paradise. And Himself and father," said Armine, still in a dreamy tone.

"Oh, yes ; that's for you! But how about a mad fellow like me? It's so sneaking just to take to one's prayers because one's in a bad case."

"Oh, Jock! He is always ready to hear! More ready than we to pray!"

"Now don't begin to improve the occasion," broke

out Jock. "By all the stories that ever were written, I'm the one to come to a bad end, not you."

"Don't," said Armine, with an accent of pain that made Jock cry, hugging him tighter. "There, never mind, Armie; I'll let you say all you like. I don't know what made me stop you, except that I'm a beast, and always have been one. I'd give anything not to have gone on playing the fool all my life, so as to be able to mind this as little as you do."

"I don't seem awake enough to mind anything much," said the little boy, "or I should trouble more about Mother and Babie; but somehow I can't."

"Oh!" wailed Jock, "you must! You must get out of it, Armie. Come closer. Shove in between me and the rock. Here, Chico, lie down on the top of us! Mother must have you back any way, Armie."

The little fellow was half-dozing, but words of prayer and faith kept dropping from his tongue. Pain, and a stronger vitality alike, kept Jock free from the torpor, and he used his utmost efforts to rouse his brother; but every now and then a horrible conviction of the hopelessness of their condition came over him.

"Oh!" he groaned out, "how is it to be if this is the end of it? What is to become of a fellow that has been like me?"

Armine only spoke one word; the Name that is above every name.

"Yes, you always cared! But I never cared for

anything but fun ! Never went to Communion at Easter. It is too late."

"Oh, no, no !" cried Armine, rousing up, "not too late ! Never ! You are His ! You belong to Him ! He cares for you !"

"If He does, it makes it all the worse. I never heeded ; I thought it all a bore. I never let myself think what it all meant. I've thrown it all away."

"Oh I wish I wasn't so stupid," cried Armine, with a violent effort against his exhaustion. "Mother loves us, however horrid we are ! He is like that ; only let us tell Him all the bad we've done, and ask Him to blot it out. I've been trying—trying—only I'm so dull ; and let us give ourselves more and more out and out to Him, whether it is here or there."

"That I must," said Jock ; "it would be shabby and sneaking not."

"Oh, Jock," cried Armine, joyfully, "then it will all be right any way ;" and he raised his face and kissed his brother. "You promise, Jock. Please promise."

"Promise what ? That if He will save us out of this, I'll take a new line, and be as good as I know how, and——"

Armine took the word, whether consciously or not : "And manfully to fight under His banner, and continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives' end. Amen !"

"Amen," Jock said, after him.

After that, Jock found that the child was repeating

the Creed, and said it after him, the meanings thrilling through him as they had never done before. Next followed lines of "Rock of Ages," and for some time longer there was a drowsy murmur of sacred words, but there was no eliciting a direct reply any more; and with dull consternation, Jock knew that the fatal torpor could no longer be broken, and was almost irritated that all the words he caught were such happy, peaceful ones. The very last were, "Inside angels' wings, all white down."

The child seemed almost comfortable—certainly not suffering like himself, bruised and strained, with sharp twinges rending his damaged foot; his limbs cramped, and sensible of the acute misery of the cold, and the full horror of their position; but as long as he could shake even an unconscious murmur from his brother, it seemed like happiness compared with the utter desolation after the last whisper had died away, and he was left intolerably alone under the solid impenetrable shroud that enveloped him, and the senseless form he held on his breast. And if he tried to follow on by that clue which Armine had left him, whirlwinds of dismay seemed to sweep away all hope and trust, while he thought of wilfulness, recklessness, defiance, irreverence, and all the yet darker shades of a self-indulgent and audacious school-boy life!

It was a little lighter, as if dawn might be coming, but the cold was bitterer, and benumbing more than paining him. His clothes were stiff, his eyelashes

white with frost, he did not feel equal to looking at his watch, he *would* not see Armine's face, he found the fog depositing itself in snow, but he heeded it no longer. Fear and hope had alike faded out of his mind, his ankle seemed to belong to some one else far away, he had left off wishing to see his mother, he wanted nothing but to be let alone !

He did not hear when Chico, finding no comfort, no sign of life in his masters, stood upon them as they lay clasped together in the drift of fine small snow, and in the climax of misery he lifted up the long and wretched wailing howlings of utter dog-wretchedness.

CHAPTER XX.

A RACE.

Speed, Melise, speed ! such cause of haste
Thine active sinews never braced ;
Bend 'gainst the steepy hill thy breast,
Burst down like torrent from its crest.

Scott.

“HARK !”

The guides and the one other traveller, a Mr. Graham, who had been at the inn, were gathered at the border of the Daubensee, entreating, almost ready to use force to get the poor mother home before the snow should efface the tracks, and render the return to Schwarenbach dangerous.

Ever since the alarm had been given there had been a going about with lights, a shouting and seeking, all along the road where she had parted with her sons. It was impossible in the fog to leave the beaten track, and the traveller told her that rewards would be but temptations to suicide.

Johnny had fortunately been so tired out that he had gone to bed soon after coming in, and had not been wakened by the alarm till eleven o'clock. Then, startled by the noises and lights, he had risen and made his way to his aunt. Substantial help he could

not give—even his German was halting, but he was her stay and help, and she would—as she knew afterwards—have been infinitely more desolate without him. And now, when all were persuading her to wait, as they said, till more aid could be sent for to Kandersteg, he knew as well as she did that it was but a kindly ruse to cover their despair, and was striving to insist that another effort in daylight should be made.

He it was who uttered the “Hark,” and added, “That is Chico !”

At first the tired, despairing guides did not hear, but going along the road by the lake in the direction from which the sound came, the prolonged wail became more audible.

“It is on the moraine,” the men said, with awe-struck looks at one another.

They would fain not even have taken John with them, but with a resolute look he uttered “*Ich komm.*”

Mr. Graham, an elderly man, not equal to a moraine in the snow, stayed with the mother. He wanted to take her back to prepare for them, as he said—in reality to lesson any horrors there might be to see.

But she stood like a statue, with clasped hands and white face, the small feathery snow climbing round her feet and on her shoulders.

“O God, spare my boys ! Though I don’t deserve it—spare them !” had been her one inarticulate prayer all night.

And now—shouts and jodels reach her ears. They

are found! But how found! The cries are soon hushed. There is long waiting—then, 'through the snow, John flashes forward and takes her hand. He does not speak—only as their eyes meet, his pale lips tremble, and he says, "Don't fear; they will revive in the inn. Jock is safe, they are sure."

Safe? What? that stiff, white-faced form, carried between two men, with the arm hanging lifelessly down? One man held the smaller figure of Armine, and kept his face pressed inwards. Kind words of "Liebe Frau," and assurances that were meant to be cheering passed around her, but she heard them not. Some brandy had, it seemed, been poured into their mouths. They thought Jock had swallowed, Armine had not.

At intervals on the way back a little more was administered, and the experienced guides had no doubt that life was yet in him. When they reached the hotel the guides would not take them near the stove, but carried them up at once by the rough stair to the little wood-partitioned bedrooms. There were two beds in each room, and their mother would have had them both together; but the traveller, and the kindly, helpful young landlady, Fräulein Rosalie, quietly managed otherwise, and when Johnny tried to enforce his aunt's orders, Mr. Graham, by a sign, made him comprehend why they had thus arranged, filling him with blank dismay.

A doctor? The guides shook their heads. They

could hardly make their way to Leukerbad while it was snowing as at present, and if they had done so, no doctor could come back with them. Moreover the restoratives were known to the mountaineers as well as to the doctors themselves, and these were vigorously applied. All the resources of the little way-side house were put in requisition. Mr. Graham and Johnny did their best for Jock, his mother seemed to see and think of nothing but Armine, who lay senseless and cold in spite of all their efforts.

It was soon that Jock began to moan and turn and struggle painfully back to life. When he opened his eyes with a dazed half-consciousness, and something like a word came from between his lips, Mr. Graham sent John to call the mother, saying very low, "Get her away. She will bear it better when she sees this one coming round."

John had deep and reverent memories connected with Armine. He knew—as few did know—how steadfastly that little gentle fellow could hold the right, and more than once the two had been almost alone against their world. Besides, he was Mother Carey's darling! Johnny felt as if his heart would break, as with trembling lips he tried to speak, as if in glad hope, as he told his aunt that Jock was speaking and wanted her, while he looked all the time at the still, white, inanimate face.

She looked at him half in distrust.

"Yes! Indeed, indeed," he said, "Jock wants you."

She went ; Johnny took her place. The efforts at restoration were slackening. The attendants were shaking their heads and saying, "*der Arme.*"

Mr. Graham came up to him, saying in his ear, "She is engrossed with the other. He will not let her go. Let them do what is to be done for this poor little fellow. So it will be best for her."

There was a frantic longing to do something for Armine, a wild wonder that the prayers of a whole night had not been more fully answered in John's mind, as he threw himself once more over the senseless form, propped with pillows, and kissed either cheek and the lips. Then suddenly he uttered a low cry, "He breathed. I'm sure he did ; I felt it ! The spoon ! O quick !"

Mr. Graham and the Fräulein looked pitifully at one another at the delusion ; but they let the lad have the spoon with the drops of brandy. He had already gained experience in giving it, and when they looked for disappointment, his eyes were raised in joy.

"It's gone down," he said.

Mr. Graham put his hand on the pulse and nodded.

Another drop or two, and renewed rubbing of hands and feet. The icy cold, the deadly white, were certainly giving way, the lips began to quiver, contract, and gasp.

Was it for death or life ? They would not call his mother for that terrible, doubtful minute ; but she could not long stay away. When Jock's fingers first relaxed on hers, she crept to the door of the other

room, to see Armine upheld on Johnny's breast, with heaving chest and working features, but with eyes opening : yes, and meeting hers.

Johnny always held that he never had so glad a moment in all his life as that when he saw her countenance light up.

The first word was "Jock !"

Armine's full perceptions were come back, unlike those of Jock, who was moaning and wandering in his talk, fancying himself still in the desolation of the moraine, with Armine dead in his arms, and all the miseries, bodily, mental and spiritual, from which he had suffered were evidently still working in his brain, though the words that revealed them were weak and disjointed. Besides, he screamed and moaned with absolute and acute pain, which alarmed them much, though Armine was sufficiently himself to be able to assure them that there had been no hurt beyond the strain.

It was well that Armine was both rational and unselfish, for nothing seemed to soothe Jock for a moment but his mother's hand and his mother's voice. It was plain that fever and rheumatism had a hold upon him, and what or who was there to contend with them in this wayside inn ? The rooms, though clean, were bare of all but the merest necessities, and though the young hostess was kind and anxious, her maids were the roughest and most ignorant of girls, and there were no appliances for comfort—nothing even to drink but

milk, bottled lemonade, and a tisane made of yellow flowers, horrible to the English taste.

And Jock, ill as he was, did not fill his mother with such dread for the future as did Armine, when she found him, quiet indeed, but unable to lie down, except when supported on John's breast and in his arms—with a fearful oppression and pain in his chest, and every token that the lungs were suffering. He had not let them call her. Jock's murmurs and cries were to be heard plainly through the wooden partition, and the little fellow knew she could not be spared, and only tried to prevent John and Mr. Graham from alarming her. "She—can't—do—any—good," he gasped out in John's ear.

No, nobody could, without medical skill and appliances. The utmost that the house could do was to produce enough mustard to make two plasters, and to fill bottles with hot water, to warm stones, and to wrap them in blankets. And what was this, in such cold as penetrated the wooden building, too high up in the mountains for the June sun as yet to have full power? The snow kept blinding and drifting on, and though everyone said it could not last long at that time in the summer, it might easily last too long for Armine's fragile life. Here was evening drawing on and no change outside, so that no offer of reward could make it possible for any messenger to attempt the Gemmi to fetch advice from Leukerbad.

Caroline could not think. She was in a dull, dreary

state of consternation, and all she could dwell on was the immediate need of the moment, soothing Jock's terrors, and, what was almost worse, his irritable rejection of the beverages she could offer him, and trying to relieve him by rubbing and hot applications. If ever she could look into Armine's room, she was filled with still greater dismay, even though a sweet, patient smile always met her, and a resolute endeavour to make the best of it.

"It—does—not—make—much—difference," gasped Armine. "One would not like anything."

John came out in a character no one could have expected. He showed himself a much better nurse, and far more full of resource than the traveller. It was he who bethought him of keeping a kettle in the room over the inevitable charcoal, so as slightly to mitigate the chill of the air, or the fumes of the charcoal, which were equally perilous and distressing to the labouring lungs. He was tender and handy in lifting, tall and strong, so as to be efficient in supporting, and then Armine and he understood one another. They had never been special companions ; John had too much of the Kencroft muscularity about him to accord with a delicate, imaginative being like Armine, but they respected one another, and made common cause, and John had more than once been his little cousin's protector. So when they were so much alone that all reserves were overcome, Armine had comfort in his cousin that no one else in the place

could have afforded him. The little boy perfectly knew how ill he was, and as he lay in John's arms, breathed out his messages to Babie as well as he could utter them.

"And please, you'll be always mother's other son," said Armine.

"Won't I? She's been the making of me every way," said John.

"If ever—she does want anybody——" said Armine, feeling, but not uttering, a vague sense of want of trust in others around her.

"I will, I will. Why, Armie, I shall never care for any one so much."

"That's right."

And again, after an interval, Armine spoke of Jock, saying, "You'll help him, Johnny. You know sometimes he can be put in mind——"

John promised again, perhaps less hopefully, but he saw that Armine hoped.

"Would you mind reading me a Psalm," came, after a great struggle for breath. "It was so nice to know Babie was saying her Psalms at night, and thinking of us."

So the evening wore away and night came on, and John, after full six-and-twenty hours' wakeful exertion and anxiety, began to grow sleepy, and dozed even as he held his cousin whenever the cough did not shake the poor little fellow. At last, with Armine's consent, or rather, at his entreaty, Mr. Graham, though know-

ing himself a bad substitute, took him from the arms of the outwearied lad, who, in five minutes more, was lying, dressed as he was, in the soundest of dreamless slumbers.

When he awoke, the sun was up, an almost midsummer sun, streaming on the fast-melting snow with a dazzling brilliancy. Armine was panting under the same deadly oppression on his pillows, and Mother Carey was standing by him, talking to Mr. Graham about despatching a messenger to Leukerbad in search of one of the doctors, who were sure to be found at the baths. How haggard her face looked, and Armine gasped out—

“Mother, your hair.”

The snow had been there ; the crisp black waves on her brow were quite white. Jock had fallen into a sort of doze from exhaustion, but moaning all the time. She could call him no better, and Armine’s sunken face told that he was worse.

John went in search of more hot water, and on the way heard voices which made him call Mr. Graham, who knew more of the vernacular German *patois* than himself, to understand it. He thought he had caught something about English, and a doctor at Kandersteg.

It was true. A guide belonging to the other side of the pass, who had been weather-bound at Kandersteg, had just come up with tidings that an English party were there, who had meant to cross the Gemmi but had given it up, finding it too early in the

season for the *kränklicher* Milord who was accompanied by his doctor.

"An English doctor! Oh!" cried John, "there's some good in that. Some one must take a note down to him at once."

But after some guttural conversation of which he understood only a word or two, Mr. Graham said—

"They declare it is of no use. The carriage was ordered at nine. It is past seven now."

"But it need not take two hours to go that distance downhill, the lazy blackguards!" exclaimed John.

"In the present state of the path, they say that it will," said Mr. Graham. "In fact, I suspect a little unwillingness to deprive their countrymen of the job."

"I'll go," said John, "then there will be no loss of time about writing. You'll look after Armine, sir, and tell my aunt."

"Certainly, my boy; but you'll find it a stiffish pull."

"I came in second for the mile race last summer at Eton," said Johnny. "I'm not in training now; but if a will can do it——"

"I believe you are right. If you don't catch him, we shall hardly have lost time, for they say we must wait an hour or two for the Gemmi road to get clear of snow. Stay; don't go without eating. You won't keep it up on an empty stomach. Remember the proverb."

Prayer had been with him all night, and he listened

to the remonstrance as to provender enough to devour a bit of bread, put another into his pocket, and swallow a long draught of new milk. Mr. Graham further insisted on his taking a lad to show him the right path through the fir woods ; and though Johnny looked more formed for strength than speed, and was pale-cheeked and purple-eyed with broken rest, the manner in which he set forth had a purpose-like air that was satisfactory—not over swift at the outset over the difficult ground, but with a steadfast resolution, and with a balance and knowledge of the management of his limbs due to Eton athletics.

Mr. Graham went up to encourage Mrs. Brownlow. She clasped her hands together with joy and gratitude.

“That dear, dear boy,” she said, “I shall owe him everything.”

Jock had wakened rational, though only to be conscious of severe suffering. He would hardly believe that Armine was really alive till Mr. Graham actually carried in the boy, and let them hold each other's hands for a moment before placing Armine on the other bed.

Indeed it seemed that this might be the poor boys' last meeting. Armine could only look at his brother, since the least attempt to speak increased the agonised struggle for breath, which, doctor or no doctor, gave Mr. Graham small expectation that he could survive another of these cold mountain nights.

Their mother was so far relieved to have them

together that it was easier to attend to them ; and Armine's patient eyes certainly acted as a gentle restraint upon Jock's moans, lamentations, and requisitions for her services. It was one of those times that she only passed through by her faculty of attending only to present needs, and the physical strength and activity that seemed inexhaustible as long as she had anything to do, and which alone alleviated the despair within her heart.

Meantime John found the rock slippery, the path heavy, and his young guide a drag on him. The path through the fir woods which had been so delightful two days (could it be only two days ?) ago, was now a baffling, wearisome zigzag ; yet when he tried to cut across, regardless of the voice of his guide, he found he lost time, for he had to clamber, once fell and rolled some distance, happily with no damage as he found when he picked himself up, and plodded on again, without even stopping to shake himself.

At last came an opening where he could see down into the Kandersteg valley. There was the hotel in clear sunshine, looking only too like a house in a German box of toys, and alas ! there was also a toy carriage coming round to the front !

Like the little foot-page of old ballads, John "let down his feet and ran," ran determinately on, down the now less precipitous slope—ran till he was beyond the trees, with the summer sun beating down on him,

and in sight of figures coming out from the hotel to the carriage.

Johnny scarce ventured to give one sigh. He waved his hat in a desperate hope of being seen. No, they were in the carriage. The horses were moving !

But he remembered a slight steep on the further road where they must go slower. Moreover, there were a few curves in the horse-road. He set his teeth with the desperate resolution of a moment, clenched his hands, intensified his mental cry to Heaven, and with the dogged determination of Kencroft dashed on, not daring to look at the carriage, intent only on the way.

He was past the inn, but his breath was short and quick ; his knees were failing, an invisible hand seemed to be on his chest making him go slower and slower ; yet still he struggled on, till the mountain tops danced before his eyes, cascades rushed into his ears, the earth seemed to rise up and stop him ; but through it all he heard a voice say, "Hullo, it's the Monk ! What is the matter ?"

Then he knew he was on the ground on his face, with kind but tormenting hands busy about him, and his heart going so like a sledge hammer, that the word he would have given his life to utter, would not come out of his lips, and all he could do was to grasp convulsively at something that he believed to be a garment of the departing travellers.

"Here, the flask ! Don't speak yet," said a man's

voice, and a choking stimulant was poured into his mouth. When the choking spasm it cost him was over, his eyes cleared, and he could at least gasp. Then he saw that it was his housemate, Evelyn, at whom he was clutching, and who asked again in amaze—

“What is up, old fellow?”

“Hush, not yet,” said the other voice; “let him alone till he gets his breath. Don’t hurry, my boy,” he added, “we will wait.”

Johnny, however, felt altogether absorbed in getting out one panting whisper, “A doctor.”

“Yes, yes, he is,” cried Evelyn. “What’s the matter? Not Brownlow!”

“Both—oh,” sobbed John in the agony of contending with the bumping, fluttering heart which *would* not let him fetch breath enough to speak.

“You will tell us presently. Don’t be afraid. We will wait,” said the voice of the man who, as John now felt, was supporting him. “Hush, Cecil, another minute, and he will be able to tell us.”

Indeed the rushing of every pulse was again making it vain for Johnny to try to utter anything, and he shut his eyes in the realisation that he had succeeded and found help. If his heart would have not bumped and fluttered so fearfully, it would have been almost rest, as he was helped up by those kind, strong arms. It was really for little more than five seconds before he gathered his powers to say, still between gasps—

"Out all night—the moraine—fog—snow—Jock—very bad—Armine—worse—up there."

"At Schwarenbach?"

"Yes. Oh, come! They are so ill."

"I am sure Dr. Medlicott will do all he can for them," said another voice, which John saw proceeded from a very tall, slight youth, with a fair, delicate, girlish face. "Had he not better get into the carriage and return to the hotel?"

"By all means."

And John found himself without much volition lifted and helped into the carriage, where Cecil Evelyn scrambled up beside him, and put an arm round him.

"Poor old Monk, you are dead beat," he said, as the carriage turned, the other two walking beside it. "Did you come that pace all the way down?"

"Only after the wood."

"Well, 'twas as plucky a thing as I ever saw. But is Skipjack so bad?"

"Dreadful! Light-headed all yesterday—horrid pain! But not so bad as Armine. If something ain't done soon—he'll die."

"Poor little Brownlow! You've come to the right shop. Medlicott is first rate. Did you know it was we?"

"No—only—an English doctor," said John.

"Mother sent us abroad with him, because they said Fordham must have Swiss air; and poor old Granny still goes on in the same state," said Cecil.

"We got here on Tuesday evening, and saw your names; but then the fog came, and it snowed all yesterday, and the doctor said it would not do for Fordham to go so high. And the more I wanted them to come up with you, the more they would not. Were they out in that snow?"

Here came an order from the doctor not to make his friend talk, and Johnny was glad to obey, and reserve his breath for the explanation. He did not hear what passed between the other two, as they walked behind the carriage.

"A fine fellow that! Is he Cecil's friend?"

"No, I wish he were. However, it can't be helped now, in common humanity; and my mother will understand."

"You mean that it was her wish that we should avoid them."

"She thinks the influence has not been good for Cecil."

"That was the reason you gave up the Gemmi so easily."

"It was. But, as I say, it can't be helped now, and no harm can be done by going to see whether they are really so ill."

"Brownlow is the name. I wonder if they are any relation to a man I once knew—a lecturer at one of the hospitals?"

"Not likely. These are very rich people, with a great house in Hyde Park regions, and a place in the

country. They are always asking Cecil there ; only my mother does not fancy it. It is not a matter of charity after the first stress. They can easily have advice from England, or anywhere they like."

By this time they reached the hotel, and John alighted briskly enough, and explained the state of affairs in a few words.

"My dear boy," said Dr. Medlicott, "I'll go up at once, as soon as I can get at our travelling medicine-chest. Luckily we have what is most likely to be useful."

"Thank you," said Johnny, and therewith he turned dizzy, and reeled against the wall.

"It is nothing—nothing," he said, as the doctor, having helped him into a sitting-room, laid his hand on his pulse. "Don't delay about me! I shall be all right in a minute."

"They are getting down the boxes. No time is lost," said the doctor, quietly. "See whether they can let us have some soup, Cecil."

"I couldn't swallow anything," said Johnny, imploringly.

"Have you had any breakfast this morning?"

"Yes, a bit of bread and a drink of milk. There was not time for more."

"And you had been searching all one night, and nursing the next?"

"Most of it," was the confession. "But I shall be all right—if there is any pony I could ride upon."

"You shall by-and-by; but first, Reeves," as a servant with grizzled hair and moustache brought in a neatly-fitted medicine-chest, "I give this young gentleman into your care. He is to lie down on my bed for half an hour, and Mr. Evelyn is not to go near him. Then, if he is awake——"

"If——" ejaculated John.

"Give him a basin of soup—Liebig, if you can't get anything here."

"Liebig!" broke out John. "Oh, please take some. There's nothing up there but old goat, and nothing to drink but milk and lemonade, like beastly hair-oil; and Jock hates milk."

"Never fear," said Dr. Medlicott; "Liebig is going, and a packet of tea. Mrs. Evelyn does not send us out unprovided. If you eat your soup like a good boy, you may then ride up—not walk—unless you wish to be on your mother's hands too."

"She's my aunt; but it is all the same. Tell her I'm coming."

"I shall go with you, doctor," said Cecil. "I must know about Brownlow."

"Much good you'll do him! But I'd rather leave this fellow in Fordham's charge than yours."

So Johnny had no choice but to obey, growling a little that it was all nonsense, and he should be all right in five minutes, but that expectation continued, without being realised, for longer than Johnny knew. He awoke with a start to find the Liebig awaiting

him ; and Lord Fordham's eyes fixed on him, with (though neither understood it) the generous, though melancholy envy of an invalid youth for a young athlete.

"Have I been asleep?" he asked, looking at his watch. Only ten minutes since I looked last? Well, now I am all right."

"You will be when you have eaten this," said Lord Fordham.

Johnny obeyed, and ate with relish.

"There!" said he; "now I am ready for anything."

"Don't get up yet. I'll go and order a horse for you."

When Lord Fordham came back from doing so, he found his patient really fast asleep, and with a little colour coming into the pale cheeks. He stole back, bade that the pony should wait, went on writing his letter, and waited till one hour, two, three hours had passed, and at last the sleeper woke, greatly disgusted, willing to accept the bath which Lord Fordham advised him to take, and which made him quite himself again.

"You'll let me go now," he said. "I can walk as well as ever."

"You will be of more use now, if you ride," said Lord Fordham. "There, I hear our luncheon coming in. You must eat while the pony is coming round."

"If it won't lose time—thank you," said Johnny,

recovered enough now to know how hungry he was, "But I ought not to have stayed away. My aunt has no one but me."

"And you can really help her?" said Lord Fordham, with some experience of his brother's uselessness.

"Not well, of course," said Johnny; "but it is better than nobody; and Armine is so patient and so good, that I'm the more afraid. Is not it a very bad sign," he added, confidentially; for he was quite won by the youth's kind, considerate way, and evident liking and sympathy.

"I don't know," faltered Lord Fordham. "My brother Walter was like that! Is this the little fellow who is Cecil's fag?"

"Yes; Jock asked him to take him, because he was sure never to bully him or lick him when he wouldn't do things."

This not very lucid description rejoiced Lord Fordham.

"I am glad of that," he said. "But I hope the little boy will get over this. My mother had a very excellent account of Dr. Medlicott's skill; and you know an illness from a misadventure is not like anything constitutional."

"No; but Armine is always delicate, and my aunt has had to take care of him."

"Do you live with them?"

"O no; I have lots of people at home. I only came with them because I had had these measles at Eton;

and my aunt is—well, the very jolliest woman that ever was.”

Lord Fordham smiled.

“Yes, indeed she is. I don’t mean only kind and good-natured. But if you just knew her! The whole world and everything else have just been something new and glorious ever since I knew her. I seem to myself to have lived in a dark hole till she made it all light.”

“Ah! I understand that you would do anything for her.”

“*That* I would, if there was anything I could do,” said Johnny, hastily finishing his meal.

“Well, you’ve done something to-day.”

“That—oh, that was nothing. I shouldn’t have made such a fool of myself if I hadn’t been seedy before. I hear the pony,” he added. “Excuse me.” And, with a murmured grace, he rose. Then, recollecting himself, “No end of thanks. I don’t know how to thank you enough.”

“Don’t ; I’ve done nothing,” said Lord Fordham, wringing his hand. “I only hope——”

The words stuck in his throat, and with a sigh he watched the lad ride off.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ACT OF INDEPENDENCE.

Soldier now and servant true ;
Earth behind and heaven in view.

Isaac Williams.

MARMADUKE ALWYN EVELYN, Viscount Fordham, was the fourth bearer of that title within ten years. His father had not lived to wear it, and his two elder brothers had both died in early youth. His precarious existence seemed to be only held on a tenure of constant precaution, and if his mother ventured to hope that it might be otherwise with the two youngest of the family, it was because they were of a shorter, sturdier, more compact form and less transparent complexion than their elders, and altogether seemed of a different constitution.

More delicate from the first than the two brothers who had gone before him, Lord Fordham had never been at school, had studied irregularly, and had never been from under his mother's wing till this summer, when she was detained by the slow decay of his grandmother. Languor and listlessness had beset the youth,

and he had been ordered mountain air, and thus it was that Mrs. Evelyn had despatched both her sons to Switzerland, under the attendance of a highly recommended physician, a young man bright and attractive, who had over-worked himself at an hospital, and needed thorough relaxation. Rightly considering Lucas Brownlow as the cause of most of Cecil's Eton follies, she had given her eldest son a private hint to elude joining forces with the family, and he was the most docile and obedient of sons. Yet was it the perversity of human nature that made him infinitely more animated and interested in John Brownlow's race and the distressed travellers on the Schwarenbach than he had been since—no one could tell when ?

Perhaps it was the novelty of being left alone and comparatively unwatched. Certain it was that he ate enough to rejoice the heart of his devoted and tyrannical attendant Reeves ; and that he walked about in much anxiety all the afternoon, continually using his telescope to look up the mountain wherever a bit of the track was visible through the pine woods.

In due time Cecil rode back the pony which John had taken up. The alacrity with which the long lank bending figure stepped to meet him was something unwonted, but the boy himself was downcast and depressed.

“ I'm afraid you've nothing good to tell.”

Cecil shook his head, and after some more seconds broke out—

"It's awful!"

"What is?"

"Brownlow's pain. I never saw anything like it!"

"Rheumatism? If that is from the exposure, I hope it will not last long."

"No. They've sent for some opiates to Leukerbad, and the doctor says that is sure to put him to sleep."

"Medlicott stays there?"

"Yes. He says if little Armine is any way fit, he must move him away to-morrow at all risks from the night-cold up there, and he wants Reeves to see about men to carry him, that is if—if to-night does not——"

Cecil could not finish.

"Then it is as bad as we heard?"

"Quite," said Cecil, "or worse. That dear little chap, just fancy!" and his eyes filled with tears. "He tried to thank me for having been good to him—as if I had."

"He was your fag?"

"Yes; Skipjack asked me to choose him because he's that sort of little fellow that won't give into anything that goes against his conscience, and if one of those fellows had him that say lower boys have no business with consciences, he might be licked within an inch of his life and he'd never give in. He did let himself be put under a pump once at some beastly hole in the country, for not choosing to use bad language, and he has never been so strong since."

"Mother would be glad that at least you allowed him the use of his conscience."

"I'm glad I did now," said Cecil, with a sigh, "though it was a great nuisance sometimes."

"Was the Monk, as you call him, one of that set?"

"Bless you, no, he's a regular sap, as steady as old time."

"I wonder if he is the son of the doctor whom Medlicott talks of."

"No; his father is alive. He is a colonel, living near their place. The other two are the doctor's sons; their mother came into the property after his death. Their Maximus was in college at first, and between ourselves, he was a bit of a snob, who couldn't bear to recollect it."

"Not your friend?"

"No, indeed. The eldest one, who has left these two years, and is at Christchurch."

"I am sure the one who came down here was a gentleman."

"So they are, all three of them," said Cecil, who had never found his brother so ready to hear anything about his Eton life, since in general accounts of the world, from which he was debarred, so jarred on his feelings that he silenced it with apparent indifference, contempt, or petulance. Now, however, Cecil, with his heart full of the Brownlows, could not say more of them than Fordham was willing to hear; nay,

he even found an amused listener to some of his good stories of courageous pranks.

Fordham was not yet up the next morning when there was a knock at his door, and the doctor came in, answering his eager question with—

“Yes, he has got through this night, but another up in that place would be fatal. We must get them down to Leukerbad.”

“Over that long precipitous path?”

“It is the only chance. I came down to look up bearers, and rig up a couple of hammocks, as well as to see how you are getting on.”

“Oh! I’m very well,” said Lord Fordham, in a tone that meant it, sitting up in bed. “We might ride on to Leukerbad with Reeves, and get rooms ready.”

“The best thing you could do,” said Dr. Medicott, joyfully. “When we are there we can consider what can be done next; and if you wish to go on, I could look up some one there in whose charge to leave them till they could get advice from home; but it is touch and go with that little fellow.”

“I’m in no particular hurry,” said Lord Fordham, answering the doctor’s tone rather than his words. “I would not do anything hasty or that might add to their distress. Are there likely to be good doctors at this place?”

“It is a great watering-place, chiefly for rheumatic complaints, and that is all very well for the elder boy. As to the little one, he is in as critical a state as I ever

saw, and—— His mother is an excellent linguist, that is one good thing."

"Yes ; it would be very trying for her to have a foreigner to attend the boy in such a state, however skilled he might be," said Lord Fordham. "I think we might make up our minds to stay with them till they can get some one from England."

Dr. Medicott caught at the words.

"It rests with you," he said. "Of course I am your property and Mrs. Evelyn's, but I should like to tell you why this is more to me than a matter of common humanity. I went up to study in London, a simple, foolish lad, bred up by three good old aunts, more ignorant of the world than their own tabby cat. Of course I instantly fell in with the worst stamp of fellows, and was in a fair way of being done for, body and soul, if one of the lecturers, after taking us to task for some heartless, disgusting piece of levity, seeing perhaps that it was more than half bravado on my part and nearly made me sick, managed to get me alone. He talked it out with me, found out the innocent-hearted fool I was, cured me of my false shame at what the good old souls at home had taught me, showed me what manhood was, found a good friend and a better lodging for me, in short, was the saving of me. He died three months after I first knew him, but whatever is worth having in me is owing to him."

"Was he the father of these boys ?"

"Yes; I saw a likeness in the nephew who came down yesterday, and I see it in both the others."

"Of course you would wish to do all that is possible for them?"

"I should feel it the greatest honour. Still my first duty is to you, and you have told me that your mother wished you to keep your brother out of the way of his schoolfellow."

"My mother would not wish to deprive her worst enemy of your care in such need as this," said Lord Fordham, smiling. "Besides if this friend of Cecil's were ever so bad, he couldn't do him much harm while he is ill, poor boy. We will at any rate stay to get them through the next few days, and then we can judge. I will settle it with my mother."

"I knew you would say so," rejoined the doctor. "Thank you. Then it seems to me that the right course will be to write to Mrs. Evelyn, inclosing a note to Dr. Lucas—who it seems is Mrs. Brownlow's chief reliance—asking him to find someone to send out. She can send it on to him if she disapproves of our remaining together longer than is absolutely necessary, or if Leukerbad disagrees with you. Meantime, I'll go and see whether Reeves has found any men to carry the poor boys."

Unfortunately it was too early in the season for the hotels to have marshalled their full establishment, and such careful and surefooted bearers as the sufferers needed could not be had in sufficient numbers, so that

Dr. Medlicott was forced to decide on leaving the elder patient for a night at Schwarenbach. The move might be matter of life or death to Armine ; but Jock was better, the pain could be somewhat allayed by anodynes, the fever was abating, and he would rather gain than lose by another day of rest, provided he would only accept his fate patiently, and also if he could be properly attended to. If Mr. Graham would stay with him—

So breakfast was eaten, bills were paid, horses hired, and the whole cavalcade started from Kandersteg in time to secure the best part of a bright hot day for the transit.

They met Mr. Graham, who had been glad to escape as soon as Mrs. Brownlow had found other assistance, so that the doctor was disappointed in his hope of a guardian for Jock. Lord Fordham offered to lend Reeves, but that functionary absolutely refused to separate himself from his charge, observing—

“I am responsible for your lordship to your mamma, and it does not lie within my province to leave you on any account.”

Reeves always called Mrs. Evelyn “your mamma” when he wished to be particularly authoritative with his young gentlemen. If they were especially troublesome he called her “your ma.”

“And after all,” said the doctor, “I don’t know what sort of preparations the young gentlemen would make if we let them go by themselves. A bare room,

perhaps—with no bed-clothes, and nothing to eat till the *table d'hôte*."

Reeves smiled. He had found the doctor much less of a rival than he had expected, and he was a kind-hearted man, so long as his young lord was made the first object; so he declared his willingness to do anything that lay in his power for the assistance of the poor lady and her sons. He would gladly sit up with them, if it were in the same house with his lordship.

No one came out to meet the party. John was found with Armine, who had been taken back at night to his own room; Mrs. Brownlow, as usual, with Jock, who would endure no presence but hers, and looked exceedingly injured when, sending Cecil in to sit with him, the doctor called her out of the room.

It was a sore stroke on her to hear that her charges must be separated; and there was the harrowing question whether she should stay with one or go with the other.

"Please, decide," she said.

"I think you should be with the most serious case."

"And that, I fear, means my little Armine. Yes, I will do as you tell me. But what can be done for Jock?—poor Jock who thinks he needs me most. And perhaps he does. You know best, though, Dr. Medlicott, and you shall settle it."

"That is a wise nurse," said he, kindly; "I wish I could take your place myself, but I must be with the little fellow myself; and I am afraid we can only

leave his brother to your nephew for this one night. Should you be afraid to be sole nurse ? ” he added, as Johnny came to Armine’s door.

“ I think I know what to do, if Jock can stand having me,” said Johnny, stoutly, as soon as he understood the question.

“ Mother ! ” just then shouted Jock, and as Johnny obeyed the call, he began—“ I want my head higher—no—I say not you—Mother Carey ! ”

“ She is busy with the doctor.”

“ Can’t she come and do this ? No, I say,” and he threw the nearest thing at hand at him.

“ Come,” said Cecil, “ I’m glad you can do such things as that.”

But Jock gave a cry of pain, and protested that it was all John’s fault for making him hurt himself instead of fetching mother.

“ You had better let me lift you,” said John ; “ you know she is tired, and I *really* am stronger.”

“ No, you sha’n’t touch me—a great clumsy lout.”

In the midst of these amenities, the doctor appeared, and Jock looked slightly ashamed, especially when the doctor, instead of doing what was wanted, directed John where to put an arm, and how to give support, while moving the pillow, adding that he was a handy fellow, more so than many a pupil after half a year’s training at the hospital, and smiling down Jock’s growls and groans, which were as much from displeasure as from pain. They were

followed by some despairing sighs at the horrors of the prospect of being moved.

"Ah! what will you give me for letting you off?" said the Doctor.

Jock uttered a sound of relief, then, rather distrustfully, asked—"Why?"

"We can only get bearers enough for one; and as it is most important to move your brother, while you will gain by a night's rest, he must have the first turn."

"And welcome," said Jock; "my mother will stay with me."

"That's the very point," said Dr. Medlicott. "I want you not only to give her up, but to do so cheerfully."

"I'm sure mother wants to stay with me. Armine does not need her half so much."

"He does not require the same kind of attention; but he is in so critical a state that I do not think I ought to separate her from him."

"Why, what is the matter with him?" asked Jock, startled.

"Congestion of the right lung," said the doctor, seeing that he was strong enough to bear the information, and feeling the need of rousing him from his monopolising self-absorption.

"People get over that, don't they?" said Jock, with an awestruck interrogation in his voice.

"They *do*; and I hope much from getting him into a warmer atmosphere, but the child is so much reduced

that the risk is great, and I should not dare not to have his mother with him." Then, as Jock was silent, "I have told you because you can make a great difference to their comfort by not showing how much it costs you to let her go."

Jock drew the bed clothes over his face, and an odd stifled sound was heard from under them. He remained thus *perdu*, while directions were being given to John for the night, but as the doctor was leaving the room, emerged and said—

"Bring him in before he goes."

In a short time, for it was most important not to lose the fine weather, the doctor carried Armine in, swathed in rugs and blankets, a pale, sunken, worn face, and great hollow eyes looking out at the top.

The mother said something cheerful about a live mummy, but the two poor boys gazed at one another with sad, earnest, wistful eyes, and wrung one another's hands.

"Don't forget," gasped Armine, labouring for breath. And Jock answered—

"All right, Armie ; good-bye. I'm coming to-morrow," with a choking, quivering attempt at bravery.

"Yes, to-morrow," said poor Mother Carey, bending over him. "My boy—my poor good boy, if I could but cut myself in two ! I can't tell you how thankful I am to you for being so good about it. That dear good Johnny will do all he can, and it is only till to-morrow. You'll sleep most of the time."

"All right, mother," was again all that Jock could manage to utter, and the kisses that followed seemed to him the most precious he had known. He hid his face again, bearing his trouble the better because of the lull of violent pain quelled by opiates, so that his senses were all as in a dream bound up. When he looked up again at the clink of glass, it was Cecil whom he saw measuring off his draught.

"You!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Medlicott said I might stay till four, and give the Monk a chance of a sleep. That fellow can always snooze away off hand, and he is as sound as a top in the next room; but I was to give you this at two."

"You're sure it's the right stuff?"

"I should think so. We've practice enough in the family to know how to measure off a dose by this time."

"How is it you are out here still? This is Thursday, isn't it? We meant to have been half way home, to be in time for the matches."

"I'm not going back this half, worse luck. They were mortally afraid these measles would make me get tender in the chest, like all the rest of us, so I've got nothing to do but be dragged about with Fordham after churches and picture galleries and mountains," said Cecil, in a tone of infinite disgust. "I declare it made me half mad to look at the Lake of Lucerne, and recollect that we might have been in the eight."

"Not this year."

"No, but next."

In this contemplation Cecil was silent, only fondling Chico, until Jock, instead of falling asleep again, said, "Evelyn, what does your doctor really think of the little chap?"

Cecil screwed up his face as if he had rather not be asked.

"Never you think about it," he said. "Doctors always croak. He'll be all right again soon."

"If I was sure," sighed Jock; "but you know he has always been such a religious little beggar. It's a horrid bad sign."

"Like my brother Walter," said Cecil gravely. "Now, Duke can be ever so snappish and peevish; I'm not half so much afraid for him."

"You never heard anything like the little fellow that night," said Jock, and therewith he gave his friend by far the most connected account of the adventure that had yet been arrived at. He even spoke of the resolution to which he had been brought, and in a tone of awe described how he had pledged himself for the future.

"So you see I'm in for it," he concluded; "I must give up all our jolly larks."

"Then I sha'n't get into so many rows with my mother and uncle," said Cecil, by no means with the opposition his friend had anticipated.

"Then you'll stand by me?" said Jock.

"Gladly. My mother was at me all last Easter, telling me my goings on were worse to her than losing George or Walter, and talking about my Confirmation

and all. She only let me be a communicant on Easter Day, because I did mean to make a fresh start—and I did mean it with all my heart ; only when that supper was talked of, I didn't like to stick out against you, Brownlow ; I never could, you know, and I didn't know what it was coming to."

"Nor I," said Jock ; "that's the worst of it. When a lark begins one doesn't know how far one will get carried on. But that night I thought about the Confirmation, and how I had made the promise without really thinking about it, and never had been to Holy Communion."

"I meant it all," said Cecil, "and broke it, so I'm worst."

"Well !" said Jock, "if I go back from the promise little Armie made me make about being Christ's faithful soldier and servant I could never face him again—no, nor death either ! You can't think what it was like, Evelyn, sitting in the dead stillness—except for an awful crack and rumbling in the ice, and the solid snow fog shutting one in. How ugly, and brutish, and horrid all those things did look ; and how it made me long to have been like the little fellow in my arms, or even this poor little dog, who knew no better. Then somehow came now and then a wonderful sense that God was all round us, and that our Lord had done *all that* for my forgiveness, if I only meant to do right in earnest. Oh ! how to go on meaning it !"

"That's the thing," said Cecil. "I mean it fast

enough at home, and when my mother talks to me, and I look at my brothers' graves, but it all gets swept away at Eton. It won't now, though, if you are different, Brownlow. I never liked any fellow like you. I knew you were best, even when you were worst. So if you go in for doing right, I sha'n't care for any one else—not even Cressham and Bulford."

"If they choose to make asses of themselves they must," said Jock. "It will be a bore, but one mustn't mind things. I say, Evelyn, suppose we make that promise of Armine's over again together now."

"It is only the engagement we made when we were sworn into Christ's army at our baptism," said the much more fully instructed Cecil. "We always were bound by it."

"Yes, but we knew nothing about it then, and we really mean it now," said Jock. "If we do it for ourselves together, it will put us on our honour to each other, and to Christ our Captain, and that's what we want. Lay hold of my hand."

The two boys, with clasped hands, and grave, steadfast eyes, with one voice, repeated together—

"We, John Lucas Brownlow and Cecil Fitzroy Evelyn, promise with all our hearts manfully to fight under Christ's banner, and continue His faithful soldiers and servants to our lives' end. Amen."

Then Cecil touched Lucas's brow with his lips, and said—

"Fellow-soldiers, Brownlow."

"Brothers in arms," responded Jock.

It was one of those accesses of deep enthusiasm, and even of sentiment, which modern cynicism and false shame have not entirely driven out of youth. Their hearts were full; and Jock, the stronger, abler, and more enterprising, had always exercised a fascination over his friend, who was absolutely enchanted to find him become an ally instead of a tempter, and to be no longer pulled two opposite ways.

"Ought we not to say a prayer to make it really firm? We can't stand alone, you know," he said, diffidently.

"If you like; if you know one," said Jock.

Cecil knelt down and said the Lord's Prayer and the collect for the Fourth Epiphany Sunday.

"That's nice," was Jock's comment. "How did you know it?"

"Mother made us learn the collects every Sunday, and she wrote that in my little book. I always begin the half with it, but afterwards I can't go on."

"Then it doesn't do you much good," was the not unnatural remark.

"I don't know," said Cecil, hesitating; "may be *all this*—your getting right, I mean, is the coming round of prayers—my mother's, I mean, for if you take this turn, it will be much easier for me! Poor mother! it's not for want of her caring and teaching."

"My mother doesn't bother about it."

"I wish she did," said Cecil. "If she had gone on like mine, you would have been ever so much better than I."

"No, I should have been bored and bothered into being regularly good-for-nothing. You don't know what she's really like. She's nicer than anyone—as jolly as any fellow, and yet a lady all over."

"I know that," said Cecil ; "she's was uncommonly jolly to me at Eton, and I know my mother and she will get on like a house on fire. We're too old to have a scrimmage about them like disgusting little lower boys," he added, seeing Jock still bristling in defence of Mother Carey.

This produced a smile, and he went on—

"Look here, Skipjack, we *will* be fellow-soldiers every way. My Uncle James can do anything at the Horse Guards, and he shall have us set down for the same regiment. I'll tell him you are my good influence."

"But I've been just the other way."

"Oh, but you will be—a year or two will show it. Which shall it be? Do you go in for cavalry or infantry? I like cavalry, but he's all for the other."

Jock was wearied enough not to have much contribution to make to the conversation, and he thus left Cecil such a fair field as he seldom enjoyed for Uncle James's Indian and Crimean campaigns, and for the comparative merits of the regiments his nephew had beheld at reviews.

He was interrupted by a message from the guide that there was a cloud in the distance, and the young Herr had better set off quickly unless he wished to be weather-bound.

Johnny was on his feet as soon as there was a step on the stairs, and was congratulated on his ready powers of sleeping.

"It's in the family," said Jock. "His brother Rob went to sleep in the middle of the examination for his commission."

"Then I should think he could sleep on the rack," said Cecil.

"I'm sure I wish I could," rejoined Jock.

"What a sell for the torturers, to get some chloroform!" said John. And so Cecil departed amid laughter, which gave John little idea how serious the talk had been in his absence.

The rain came on even more rapidly than the guide had foretold, and it was a drenched and dripping object that rode into the court of the tall hotel at Leukerbad, and immediately fell into the hands of Dr. Medlicott and Reeves, who deposited him ignominiously in bed, in spite of all his protestations and murmurs. However, he had the comfort of hearing that his little fag was recovering from the exhaustion of the journey. He had at first been so faint that the doctor had watched, fearing that he would never revive again, and he had not yet attempted to speak; but his breathing was certainly already less

laboured, and the choking, struggling cough less frequent. "He really seems likely to have a little natural sleep," was Lord Fordham's report somewhat later, on coming in to find Cecil sitting up in bed to discuss a very substantial supper. "I hope that with Reeves and the doctor to look to him, his mother may get a little rest to-night."

"Have you seen her?"

"Only for a moment or two, poor thing; but I never did see such eyes or such a wonderful sad smile as she tried to thank us with. Medlicott is ready to do anything for her husband's sake; I am sure anyone would do the same for hers. To get such a look is something to remember!"

"Well done, Duke!" ejaculated Cecil under his breath, for he had never seen his senior so animated or so enthusiastic. "Then you mean to stay, and let Medlicott look after them?"

"Of course I do," said Fordham, in a much more decided tone than he had used in the morning. "I'm not going to do anything so barbarous as to leave them to some German practitioner; and when we are here, I don't see why they should have advice out from home—not half so good probably."

"You're a brick, Duke," uttered Cecil; and though Fordham hated slang, he smiled at the praise.

"And now, Duke, be a good fellow, and give me some clothes. That brute Reeves has not brought me in one rag."

"Really it is hardly worth while. It is nearly eight o'clock, and I don't know where your portmanteau was put. Shall I get you a book?"

"No; but if you'd get me a pen and ink, I want to write to mother."

Such a desire was not too frequent in Cecil, and Fordham was glad enough to promote it, bringing in his own neat apparatus, with only a mild entreaty that his favourite pen might be well treated, and the sheets respected. He had written his own letter of explanation of his first act of independence, and he looked with some wonder at his brother's rapid writing, not without fear that some sudden pressure for a foolish debt might have been the result of his *tête-à-tête* with his dangerous friend. Cecil's letters were too apt to be requests for money or confessions of debts, and if this were the case, what would be Mrs. Evelyn's view of the conduct of the whole party in disregarding her wishes?

Had he been with his mother, he would have probably been called into consultation over the letter, but he was forced to remain without the privilege here offered to the reader :—

"Baden Hotel, Leukerbad, June 14.

"DEAREST MOTHER,—Duke has written about our falling in with the Brownlows, and how pluckily Friar caught us up. It was a regular mercy, for the little one couldn't have lived without Dr. Medlicott,

and most likely Lucas is in for a rheumatic fever. He has been telling me all about it, and how frightful it was to be all night out on the edge of the glacier in a thick fog with his ankle strained, and how little Armine went on with his texts and hymns and wasn't a bit afraid, but quite happy. You never would believe what a fellow Brownlow is. We have had a great talk, and you will never have to say again that he does me harm.

"Mammy, darling, I want to tell you that I was a horrible donkey last half, worse than you guessed, and I am sorrier than ever I was before, and this is a real true resolution not to do it again. Brownlow and I have promised to stand by one another about right and wrong to our lives' end. He means it, and what Brownlow means he does, and so do I. We said your collect, and somehow I do feel as if God would help us now.

"Please, dearest mother, forgive me for all I have not told you.

"Duke is very well and jolly. He is quite smitten with Mrs. Brownlow, and, what is more, so is Reeves, who says she is 'such a lady that it is a pleasure to do anything for her.'

"Your loving son,

"C. F. E."

Cecil's letter went off with his brother's in early morning; but it was such a day as only mails and

postmen encounter. Mountains, pine-woods, nay, even the opposite houses, were blotted out by sheets of driving rain, and it was impossible to think of bringing Jock down! Dr. Medlicott heard and saw with dismay. What would the mother say to him—nay, what ought he to have done? He could hardly expect her not to reproach him, and he fairly dreaded meeting her eyes when they turned from the streaming window.

But all she said was, "We did not reckon on this."

"If I had ——" began the doctor.

"Please don't vex yourself," said she; "you could not have done otherwise, and perhaps the move would have hurt him more than staying there. You have been so very kind. See what you have done here!"

For Armine, after some hours that had been very distressing, had sunk into a calm sleep, and there was a far less oppressed look on his wan little face.

The doctor would have had her take some rest, but she shook her head. The only means of allaying the gnawing anxiety for Jock, and the despairing fancies about his suffering and Johnny's helplessness, was the attending constantly to Armine.

"Any way, I will see him to-day," said Dr. Medlicott, impelled far more by the patient silence with which she sat, one hand against her beating heart, than he would have been by any entreaty. But how she thanked him when she found him really setting forth! She insisted on his taking a guide, as much for

his own security as to carry some additional comforts to the prisoners, and she committed to him two little notes, one to each boy, written through a mist of tears. Yes ; tears, unusual as they were with her, were called forth as much by the kindness she met with as by her sick yearning after the two lonely boys. And when she knew the doctor was on his way, she could yield to Armine's signs of entreaty, lie back in her chair and sleep, while Reeves watched over him.

When the doctor, by a strong man's determination, had made his way up the pass, he found matters better than he had dared to expect. The patient was certainly not worse, and the medicine had kept him in a sleepy, tranquil state, in which he hardly realised the situation. His young attendant was just considering how to husband the last draught, when the welcome, dripping visitor appeared. The patient was not in bad spirits *considering*, and could not but feel himself reprieved by the weather. He was too sleepy to feel the dulness of his present position, and even allowed that his impromptu nurse had done tolerably well. Johnny had been ready at every call, had rubbed away an attack of pain, hurt wonderfully little in lifting him, and was "not half a bad lot altogether"—an admission of which doctor and nurse knew the full worth.

Johnny himself was pleased and grateful, and had that sort of satisfaction which belongs to the finding out of one's own available talent. He had done what

was pronounced the right thing; and not only that, but he had liked the doing it, and he declared himself not afraid to encounter another night alone with his cousin. He had picked up enough vernacular German to make himself understood, and indeed was a decided favourite with Fräulein Rosalie, who would do anything for her dear young Herr. It was possible to get a fair amount of sleep, and Dr. Medlicott felt satisfied that the charge was not too much for him, and indeed there was no other alternative. The doctor stayed as long as he could, and did his best to enliven the dulness by producing a pocketful of Tauchnitzes, and sitting talking while the patient dozed. Johnny showed such intelligent curiosity as to the how and why of the symptoms and their counteraction, that after some explanation the doctor said, "You ought to be one of us, my friend."

"I have sometimes thought about it," said John.

"Indeed!" cried the doctor, like an enthusiast in his profession; and John, though not a ready speaker, was drawn on by his notes of interest to say, "I don't really like anything so much as making out about man and what one is made of."

"Physiology?"

"Yes," said the boy, who had been shy of uttering the scientific term. "There's nothing like it for interest, it seems to me. Besides, one is more sure of being of use that way than in any other."

"Capital ! Then what withholds you ? Isn't it *swell* enough ?"

Johnny laughed and coloured. "I'm not such a fool, but I am not sure about my people."

"I thought your uncle was Joseph Brownlow."

"My aunt would be delighted, but it is my own people. They would say my education—Eton and *all that*—was not intended for it."

"You may tell them that whatever tends to make you more thoroughly a man and gentleman, and less of a mere professional, is a benefit to your work. The more you are in yourself, the higher your work will be. I hope you will go to the university."

"I mean to go up for a scholarship next year ; but I've lost a great deal of time now, and I don't know how far that will tell."

"I think you will find that what you may have lost in time, you will have gained in power."

"I *do* want to go in for physical science, but there's another difficulty. One of my cousins does so, but the effect on him has not made my father like it the better—and—and to tell the truth—" he half mumbled, "it makes me doubt——"

"The effect on his faith ?"

"Yes."

"If faith is unsettled by looking deeper into the mysteries of God's works it cannot have been substantial faith, but merely outward, thoughtless recep-

tion," said the doctor, as he met two thoughtful dark eyes fixed on him in inquiry and consideration.

"Thank you, sir," after a pause.

"Had this troubled you?"

"Yes," said John; "I couldn't stand doubt *there*. I would rather break stones on the road than set myself doubting!"

"Why should you think that there is danger?"

"It seems to be so with others."

"Depend upon it, Doubting Castle never lay on the straight road. If men run into it, it is not simple study of the works of creation that leads them there; but either they have only acquiesced, and never made their faith a living reality, or else they are led away by fashion and pride of intellect. One who begins and goes on in active love of God and man, will find faith and reverence not diminished but increased."

"But aren't there speculations and difficulties?"

"None which real active religion and love cannot regard as the mere effects of half-knowledge—the distortions of a partial view. I speak with all my heart, as one who has seen how it has been with many of my own generation, as well as with myself."

Johnny bent his head, and the young physician, somewhat surprised at finding himself saying so much on such points, left that branch of the subject, and began to talk to him about his uncle.

CHAPTER XXII.

SHUTTING THE STABLE DOOR.

Presumptuous maid, with looks intent,
Again she gazed, again she bent,
Nor knew the gulf between.

Grey.

“HURRAH ! It’s Johnny !”

“Georgie. Recollect yourself.”

“But, mamma, it was Johnny.”

“Johnny does not come till evening. Sit still, children, or I shall have to send you to dine in the nursery.”

“Somebody did pass the window, mamma, but I thought it was Rob,” said Jessie, now grown into a very fine-looking, tall, handsome maiden, with a grandly-formed head and shoulders, and pleasant soft brown eyes.

“It was Johnny,” reiterated little George ; and at that moment the dining-room door opened, and the decorum of the luncheon dinner entirely giving way, the three little ones all precipitated themselves towards the entering figure, while Jessie and her mother rose at their two ends of the table, and the Colonel, no luncheon eater, came in from the study.

"What, Johnny, already!"

"The tidal train was earlier than I expected, so I have another half-day. "Well! are you all well?"

"Quite well. Why—how you are grown! I thought it was Rob when you passed my window," said his father.

"So did I at first," added Jessie, "but Rob is much broader."

"Yes," said his mother. "I am glad you are come back, Johnny; you look thin and pale. Sit down. Some mutton or some rabbit-pie? No, no, let Jessie help you; you sha'n't have all the carving; I'm sure you are tired; you don't look at all well."

"I was crossing all night, you know," said Johnny laughing, "and am as hungry as a hunter, that's all. What a blessing to see a nice clean English potato again without any flummery!"

"Ah! I thought so," said his mother; "they didn't know how to feed you. It was an unfortunate business altogether."

"How did you leave those poor boys, Johnny?" asked his father.

"Better," said Johnny. "Jock is nearly well,—will be quite so after the baths; and Armine is getting better. He sat up for an hour the day before I came away."

"And your aunt?" said his father.

"Wonderful," said John, with a quiver of feeling on his face. "You never saw anything like her. She

keeps up, but she looks awfully thin and worn. I couldn't have left her, if Dr. Medlicott and Lord Fordham and his man had not all been bent on saving her whatever they could."

Her Serene Highness virtuously forbore a sigh. She never could believe those chains with which Caroline bound all men to her service to be either unconscious or strictly proper. However, she only said—

"It was high time that you came away ; you were quite knocked up with being left a week alone with Lucas in that horrid place. I can't think how your aunt came to think of it."

"She didn't think," said John, bluntly. "It was only a week, and it couldn't be helped. Besides it was rather jolly."

"But it knocked you up."

"Oh ! that was only a notion of the doctor and my aunt. They said I was done up first because I caught cold, and I was glad to wait a day or two longer at Leukerbad, in hopes Allen and Bobus would have come out before I went."

"They come out ! Not they !" said the Colonel. "'Tis not the way of young men nowadays to give up anything for their fathers and mothers. No, no, Bobus can't spare a week from his reading-party, but must leave his mother to a set of chance acquaintance, and Allen—whom poor Caroline always thinks the affectionate one, if he is nothing else—can't give up

going to gape at the sun at midnight, and Rob was wanting to make one of their freight of fools, but I told him it was quite enough to have one son wandering abroad at other people's expense, when it couldn't be helped ; and that I wouldn't have another unless he was prepared to lay down his share in the yacht, out of his pay and allowance. I'm glad you are come home, Johnny ; it was quite right to come as soon as your aunt could spare you, poor thing ! She writes warmly about you ; I am glad you were able to be of use to her, but you ought not to waste any more time."

"No. I wrote to my tutor that I would be at Eton to-morrow night, in time to begin the week's work."

"Papa !" cried out Mrs. Brownlow, "you will never let him start so soon ? He is so pulled down, I must have him at home to get him right again ; and there are all his clothes to look over !"

Colonel Brownlow gave the odd little chuckling noise that meant to all the family that he did not see the force of mamma's objections, and John asseverated that he was perfectly well, and that his Eton garments were all at Hyde Corner, where he should take them up. Meantime, he thought he ought to walk to Belforest to report to his cousins, and carry a key which his aunt had sent by him to Janet.

"They will be coming in this evening," said his mother ; "you had better stay and rest."

"I must go over, thank you," said John. "There

is a book Armine wants to have sent out to him. Jessie, will you walk with me ?”

“And me !” cried George.

“And me !” cried Edmund.

“And me, Lina go !” cried the smallest voice.

But the Colonel disconcerted the petitioners by announcing that he had business at Belforest, and would drive Johnny over in the dog-cart. So Jessie had to console herself by agreeing with her mother that Johnny looked much more manly, yes, and had an air and style about him which both admired very much, though, while Mrs. Brownlow deemed it the true outcome of the admixture of Friar and Brownlow, Jessie gave more credit to Eton and Belforest, for Jessie was really fond of her aunt, to whom she had owed most of her extra gaieties. Moreover, Mrs. Brownlow, though often chafing secretly, had the power of reticence, and would not set the minds of her children against one who was always doing them kindnesses. True, these favours were more than she could easily brook, since her pride and independence were not, like her husband's, tempered by warm affection. It was his doing that the expenses of Johnny's education had been accepted, and that Esther and Ellen had been sent by their aunt to a good school ; thus gratitude, unpalatable though it were, prevented unguarded censure. She abstained from much ; and as there was no quick intuition in the family, even Jessie, the most in her confidence, only vaguely

knew that mamma thought Aunt Caroline too clever and fly-away ; but mamma was grave and wise, and it was very nice to have an aunt who was young and lively, and always had pleasant things going on in her house. Jessie always had her full share, not indeed appreciating the intellect, but possessing beauty and charm enough to be always appreciated there. "Sweetly pretty," as Mrs. Coffinkey called her, was exactly what she was, for she was thoroughly good and unselfish, and a happy, simple nature looked out through her brown smiling eyes. She was very fond of her cousins, had shared all the anxieties of the last fortnight to the utmost, and was a good deal disappointed at being baulked of the walk with her brother, in which she would have heard so much more about Armine, Jock, and Aunt Caroline, than would be communicated in public.

Johnny, however, was glad of the invitation, even though a little shy of it. The *tête-à-tête* drive was an approach to the serious business of life, since it was evidently designed to give opportunity for answering a letter which he had thought out and written while laid up at Leukerbad by a bad cold and the reaction from his exertions at Schwarenbach.

Still his father did not speak till they had driven up the hill, and were near the gates of Belforest. Then he said—

"That was not 'a bad letter that you wrote me, Johnny."

Johnny flushed with pleasure. The letter had cost

him much thought and pains, and commendation from his father was rare.

"But it will take a great deal of consideration."

"Yes," said Johnny. "You don't disapprove, do you, papa?"

"Well," said the Colonel, in his ponderous way, "you have advantages, you know, and you might do better for yourself."

There was a quivering impulse on Johnny's lips to say that it was not to himself that he wanted to do good ; but when his father was speaking in that deliberate manner, he was not to be interrupted, and there was nothing for it but to hear him out.

"Your aunt is providing you with the best of educations, you have good abilities and industry, and you will be a well-looking fellow besides," added the Colonel, glancing over him with an approving eye of fatherly satisfaction ; "and it seems to me that you could succeed in some superior line. Your mother and I had always hoped to see you at the bar. Every opportunity for distinction is given you, and I do not understand this sudden desire to throw them up for a profession of much greater drudgery and fewer chances of rising, unless it were from some influence of your aunt."

"She never spoke of it. She does not know that I have thought of it, nor of my letter to you."

"Then it is simply from enthusiasm for this young doctor?"

"Not exactly," said John, "but I always wished I

could be like my uncle. I remember hearing mamma read a bit of one of the letters of condolence which said 'His was one of the most beautiful lives I have ever known,' and I never forgot it. It stayed in my mind like a riddle, till I gradually found out that the beauty was in the good he was always doing——"

"Ah!" said the Colonel, in a tone betokening that he was touched, and which encouraged John to continue.—

"Besides, I really do like and enter into scientific subjects better than any others; I believe it is my turn."

"Perhaps—you do sometimes put me in mind of your uncle. But why have you only spoken of it now?"

"I don't think I really considered what I should be," said John. "There was quite enough to think of with work, and cricket, and all the rest, till this spring, when I have been off it all, and then when I talked it over with Dr. Medlicott, he settled my mind about various things that I wanted to know."

"Did he persuade you?"

"No more than saying that I managed well for Jock when I was left alone with him, and that he thought I had the makings of a doctor in me. He loves his profession of course, and thinks it a grand one. Yes, papa, indeed I think it is. To be always learning the ways of God's working, for the sake of lessening all the pain and grief in the world——"

"Johnny! That's almost what my brother said to me thirty years ago, and what did it come to? Being at the beck and call night and day of every beggar in London, and dying at last in his prime, of disease caught in their service."

"Yes," said John, with a low, gruff sound in his voice, "but is not that like being killed in battle?"

"The world doesn't think it so, my boy," said the soldier. "Well! what is it you propose to do?"

"I don't suppose it will make much difference yet," said John, "except that at Oxford I should go in more for physical science."

"You don't want to give up the university?"

"Oh, no! Dr. Medlicott said a degree there is a great help, besides that, all the general study one can get is the more advantage, lifting one above the mere practitioner."

"That is well," said the Colonel. "If you are to go to the university, there is no need to dwell further on the matter at present. You will have had time to see more of the world, and you will know whether this wish only comes from enthusiasm for a pleasant young man who has been kind to you, or if it be your real deliberate choice, and if so, your mother will have had time to reconcile herself to the notion. At any rate we will say no more about it for the present. Though I must say, Johnny," he added, as he turned his horse's head between the ribbon borders of the approach, "you have thought and spoken like a

sensible lad, and so like my dear brother, that I could not deny you."

If Johnny could hardly believe in the unwonted commendation which made his heart throb, and sent a flood of colour into his cheeks, Colonel Brownlow was equally amazed at the boy's attainment of a manly and earnest thought and purpose, so utterly unlike anything he had hitherto seen in the stolid Rob, or the easy-going Allen, or even in Bobus, who—whatever there might be in him—never thought it worth while to show it to his uncle.

However, discussion was cut short by a little flying figure which came rushing across the garden, and Babie with streaming hair clung to her cousin, gasping—

"Oh! Johnny, Johnny, tell me about Armie and Jock!"

"They are ever so much better, Babie," said Johnny, lifting the slim little thing up in his arms, as he had lifted his own five-year-old brother; "I've got a thick parcel of acrostics for you, Armie makes them in bed, and Lord Fordham writes them out."

"Will you come to the rosary, Uncle Robert?" said Babie, recovering her manners, as Johnny set her down. "It is the coolest place, and they are sitting there."

"Why, Babie, what a sprite you look," said Johnny. "You look as if you were just off the sick-list too!"

"I'm all right," said Babie, shaking her hair at

him, and bounding on before with the tidings of their coming, while her uncle observed in a low voice—

“Poor little thing! I believe she has been a good deal knocked up between the heat and the anxiety; there was no making her eat or sleep. Ah! Miss Elfie, are you acting queen of roses?” as Babie returned together with Elvira, who with a rich dark red rose over one ear, and a large bouquet at her bosom, justified the epithet at which she bridled, and half curtsied in her graceful stately archness, as she gave her hand in greeting, and exclaimed—

“Ah, Johnny! are you come? When is Mother Carey going to send for us?”

“When they leave Leukerbad I fancy,” said John. “That’s a tiresome place for anyone who does not need to lead the life of a hippopotamus.”

“It can’t be more tiresome than this is,” said Elvira, with a yawn. “Lessons all day, and nobody to come near us.”

“Isn’t this a dreadful place?” said John, merrily, as he looked into the rosary, a charming bowery circle of fragrance, inclosed by arches of trellis-work on which roses were trained, their wreaths now bearing a profusion of blossoms of every exquisite tint, from deep crimson or golden-yellow, to purest white, while their more splendid standard sisters bloomed out in fragrant and gorgeous magnificence under their protection.

At the shady end there was a little grass plat round

a tiny fountain, whose feather of spray rose and plashed coolness. Near it were seats where Miss Ogilvie and Janet were discovered with books and work. They came forward with greetings and inquiries, which Johnny answered in detail.

"Yes, they are both better. Armine sat by the window for an hour the day before I came away."

"Will they be able to come back to Eton after the holidays?" asked his father.

"Certainly not Armine, but Jock seems to be getting all right. If he was to catch rheumatism he did it at the right place, for that's what Leukerbad is good for. Oh, Babie, you never saw such a lark! Fancy a great room, and where the floor ought to be, nothing but muddy water or liquid mud, with steps going down, and a lot of heads looking out of it, some with curly heads, some in smoking-caps, some in fine caps of lace and ribbons."

"Oh! Johnny; like women!"

"Like women! They are women."

"Not both together."

"Yes, I tell you, the whole boiling of them, male and female. There's a fat German Countess, who always calls Jock her *liebes Kind*, and comes floundering after him, to his very great disgust. The only things they have to show they are human still, and not frogs, are little boards floating before them with their pocket-handkerchiefs and coffee-cups and newspapers."

"Oh! like the little blacks in the dear bright bays at San Ildefonso," cried Elvira.

"You don't mean that they have no clothes on?" said Babie, with shocked downrightness of speech that made everybody laugh; and Johnny satisfied her on that score, adding that Dr. Medlicott had made a parody of Tennyson's "Merman," for Jock's benefit, on giving him up to a Leukerbad doctor, who was to conduct his month's *Kur*. It was to go into the "Traveller's Joy," a manuscript magazine, the first number of which was being concocted and illustrated amongst the Leukerbad party, for the benefit of Babie and Sydney Evelyn. As a foretaste, Johnny produced from the bag he still carried strapped on his shoulder, a packet of acrostics addressed to Miss Barbara Brownlow, and a smaller envelope for Janet.

"Is it the key?" asked Colonel Brownlow.

"Yes," said Janet, "the key of her davenport, and directions in which drawer to find the letters you want. Do you like to have them at once, Uncle Robert?"

"Thank you—yes, for then I can go round and settle with that fellow Martin, which I can't do without knowing exactly what passed between him and your mother."

Janet went off, observing—"I wonder whether that is a possibility;" while Miss Ogilvie put in an anxious inquiry for Mrs. Brownlow's health and spirits, and a good many more details were elicited than Johnny

had given at home. She had never broken down, and now that she was hopeful, was, in spite of her fatigue, as bright and merry as ever, and was contributing comic pictures to the "Traveller's Joy," while Lord Fordham did the sketches. Those kind people were as careful of her as any could be.

"And what are her further plans?" asked Miss Ogilvie. "Has she been able to form any?"

"Hardly," said Johnny. "They must stay at Leukerbad for a month for Jock to have the course of waters rightly, and indeed, Armine could hardly be moved sooner. I think Dr. Medlicott wants them to keep in Switzerland till the heat of the weather is over, and then winter in the south."

"And when may I go to Armine?"

"When shall we get away from here?" asked Babie and Elfie in a breath.

"I don't quite know," said John. "There is not much room to spare in the hotel where they are at Leukerbad, and it is a dreadfully slow place. Evelyn is growling like a dozen polar bears at it."

"Why isn't he gone back with you to Eton?"

"I believe it was settled that he was not to go back this half, for fear of his lungs, and you see he is a swell who takes it easily. He would have been glad enough to return with me though, and would scarcely have endured staying, but that he is so fond of Jock."

"What is there to be done there?"

"Nothing, except to wade in tepid mud. Fordham has routed out a German to read *Faust* with, and that puts Evelyn into a sweet temper. They go on expeditions, and do sketching and botany, which amuses Armine ; but they get up some fun over the queer people, and *do* them for the mag., but it is all deadly lively, not that I saw much of it, for we only got down from Schwarenbach on Monday, and they kept me in bed all the two next days ; but Jock and Evelyn hate it awfully. Indeed Jock is so down in the mouth altogether I don't know what to make of him, and just when the German doctors say the treatment makes people particularly brisk and lively."

"Perhaps what makes a German lively makes an Englishman grave," sagely observed Babie.

"Jock grave must be a strange sight," said the Colonel ; "I am afraid he can't be recovering properly."

"The doctor thinks he is," said John ; "but then he doesn't know the nature of the Skipjack. But," he added, in a low voice, "that night was enough to make any one grave, and it was much the worst to Jock, because he kept his senses almost all the time, and was a good deal hurt besides to begin with. His sprain is still so bad that he has to be carried up stairs and to go to the baths in a chair."

"And do you think," said the Colonel, "that this young lord is going to stay on all this time in this dull place for the sake of an utter stranger ?"

"Jock and Evelyn were always great friends at

Eton," said John. "Then my uncle did something, I don't know what, that Medlicott is grateful for, and they have promised to see Armine through this illness. The place agrees with Fordham ; they say he has never been so well or active since he came out."

"What is he like?" inquired Babie.

"Like, Babie? Like anything long and limp you can think of. He sits all in a coil and twist, and you don't think there's much of him ; but when he gets up and pulls himself upright, you go looking and looking till you don't know where's the top of him, till you see a thin white face in washed-out hair. He is a good fellow, awfully kind, and I suppose he can't help being such a tremendous——" John hesitated, in deference to his father, for a word that was not slang, and finally chose "don."

"Oh," sighed Babie, "Armie said in his note he was jolly beyond description."

"Well, so he is," said John ; "he plays chess with Armie, and brings him flowers and books, and waits on him as you used to do on a sick doll. And that's just what he is ; he ought to have been a woman, and he would have been much happier too, poor fellow. I'd rather be dead at once than drag about such a life of coddling as he does."

"Poor lad!" said his father. "Did Janet understand that I was waiting for those letters, I wonder?"

"You had better go and see, Babie," said Miss Ogilvie. "Perhaps she cannot find them."

Babie set off, and John proceeded to explain that Mrs. Evelyn was still detained in London by old Lady Fordham, who continued to be kept between life and death by her doctors. Meantime, the sons could dispose of themselves as they pleased, while under the care of Dr. Medlicott, and were not wanted at home, so that there was little doubt but that they would remain with Armine as long as he needed their physician's care.

All the while Elfie was flitting about, pelting Johnny with handfuls snatched from over-blown roses, and though he returned the assault at every pause, his grey travelling suit was bestrewn with crimson, pink, cream, and white petals.

At last the *débris* of a huge Eugénie Grandet hit him full on the bridge of his nose, and caused him to exclaim—

“Nay, Elfie, you little wretch; that was quite a good rose—not fair game,” and leaping up to give her chase in and out among the beds, they nearly ran against Janet returning with the letters, and saying “she was sorry to have been so long, but mother's hoards were never easy places of research.”

Barbara came more slowly back, and looked somewhat as if she had had a sharper rebuke than she understood or relished.

Poor child! she had suffered much in this her first real trouble, and a little thing was enough to upset her. She had not readily recovered from the petulant

tone of anger with which Janet told her not to come peeping and worrying.

Janet had given a most violent start when she opened the door of her mother's bedroom where the davenport stood ; and Janet much resented being startled ; no doubt that was the reason she was so cross, thought Barbara, but still it was very disagreeable.

That room was the child's also. She had been her mother's bed-fellow ever since her father's death, and she felt her present solitude. The nights were sultry, and her sleep had been broken of late.

That night she was in a slumber as cool as a widely-opened window would make it, but not so sound that she was not haunted all the time by dread for Armine.

Suddenly she was awakened to full consciousness by seeing a light in the room. No, it was not the maid putting away her dresses. It was Janet, bending over her mother's davenport.

Babie started up.

"Janet ! Is anything the matter ?"

"Nothing ! Nonsense ! go to sleep, child."

"What are you about ?"

"Never mind. Only mother keeps her things in such a mess ; I was setting them to rights after disturbing them to find the book."

There was something in the tone like an apology. Babie did not like it, but she well knew that she should be contemptuously put down if she attempted an inquiry, far less a remonstrance, with Janet. Only,

with a puzzled sort of watch-dog sense, she sat up in bed and stared.

“Why don’t you lie down?” said Janet.

Babie did lie down, but on her back, her head high up on the pillow, and her eyes well open still.

Perhaps Janet did not like it, for she gave an impatient shuffle to the papers, shut the drawer with a jerk, locked it, took up her candle, and went away without vouchsafing a “good-night.”

Babie lay wondering. She knew that the davenport contained all that was most sacred and precious to her mother, as relics of her old life, and that only dire necessity would have made her let anyone touch it. What could Janet mean? To speak would be of no use. One-and-twenty was not likely to listen to thirteen, though Babie, in her dreamy wakefulness, found herself composing conversations in which she made eloquent appeals to Janet, which she was never likely to utter.

At last the morning twitterings began outside, doves cooed, peacocks miaowed, light dawned, and Babie’s perceptions cleared themselves. In the wainscoted room was a large closet, used for hanging up cloaks and dresses, and fortunately empty. No sooner did the light begin to reflect itself in its polished oak-panelled door, than an idea struck Babie, and bounding from her bed, she opened the door, wheeled in the davenport, shut it in, turned the big rusty key with both hands and a desperate effort,

then repairing to her own little inner room, disturbed the honourable retirement of the last and best-beloved of her dolls in a pink-lined cradle in a disused doll's house, and laying the key beneath the mattress, felt heroically ready for the thumbscrew rather than yield it up. She knew Armine would say she was right, and be indignant that Janet should meddle with mother's private stores. So she turned over on the pillow, cooled by the morning breeze, and fell into a sound sleep, whence she was only roused by the third "Miss Barbara," from her maid.

She heard no more of the matter, and but for the absence of the davenport could really have thought it all a dream.

She was driving her two little fairy ponies to Kenminster with Elvira, to get the afternoon post, when a quiet, light step came into the bedroom, and Janet stood within it, looking for the davenport, as if she did not quite believe her senses. However, remembering Babie's eyes, she had her suspicions. She looked into the little girl's room and saw nothing, then tried the closet door, and finding it locked, came to a tolerably correct guess as to what had become of it, and felt hotly angry at "that conceited child's meddling folly."

For the awkward thing was that the clasped memorandum-book, containing "Magnum Bonum," was in her hand, locked out of, instead of into, its drawer.

When searching for the account-book for her uncle, it had, as it were, offered itself to her ; and though so far from being green, with "Garden" marked on it, it was Russia leather, and had J. B. upon it. She had peeped in and read "Magnum Bonum" within the lid. All day the idea had haunted her, that there lay the secret, in the charge of her little thoughtless mother, who, ignorant of its true value, and deterred by uncomprehended words and weak scruples, was withholding it from the world, and depriving her own family, and what was worst of all, her daughter, of the chances of becoming illustrious.

"I am his daughter as much as hers," thought she. "Why should she deprive me of my inheritance?"

Certainly Janet had been told that the great arcanum could not be dealt with by a woman ; but this she did not implicitly believe, and she was in consequence the more curious to discover what it really was, and whether it was reasonable to sacrifice the best years of her life to preparing for it. The supposed unfairness of her exclusion seemed to her to justify the act, and thus it was that she had stolen to the davenport when she supposed that her little sister would be asleep, and finding it impossible to attend or understand with Babie's great brown eyes lamping on her, she had carried off the book.

She had been reading it even till the morning light had surprised her, and had been able to perceive the general drift, though she had leaped over the inter-

mediate steps. She had just sufficient comprehension of the subject for unlimited confidence that the achievement was practicable, without having knowledge enough to understand a tithe of the difficulties, though she did see that they could hardly be surmounted by a woman unassisted. However, she might see her way by the time her studies were completed, and in the meantime her mother might keep the shell while she had the essence.

However, to find the shell thus left on her hands was no slight perplexity. Should she, as eldest daughter left in charge, demand the desk, Barbara would produce her reasons for its abstraction, and for this Janet was not prepared. Unless something else was wanted from it, so as to put Babie in the wrong, Janet saw no alternative but to secure the book in her own bureau, and watch for a chance of smuggling it back.

Thus Babie escaped all interrogation, but she did not release the captive davenport, and indeed she soon forgot all about it in her absorption in Swiss letters.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LOST TREASURE.

But solemn sound, or sober thought
The Fairies cannot bear ;
They sing, inspired with love and joy,
Like skylarks in the air.
Of solid sense, or thought that's grave,
You find no traces there.

Young Tamlane.

WHEN old Lady Fordham's long decay ended in death, Mrs. Evelyn would not recall her sons to the funeral, but meant to go out herself to join them, and offered to escort Mrs. Brownlow's daughters to the meeting-place. This was to be Engelberg, for Dr. Medlicott had decided that after the month at Leukerbad all his patients would be much the better for a breath of the pine-woods on the Alpine height, and undertook to see them conveyed thither in time to meet the ladies.

This proposal set Miss Ogilvie free to join her brother, who had a curacy in a seaside place where the season began just when the London season ended. Her holiday was then to begin, and Janet was to write to Mrs. Evelyn and declare herself ready to meet her in London at the time appointed.

The arrangement was not to Janet's taste. She thought herself perfectly capable of escorting the younger ones, especially as they were to take their maid, a capable person named Delrio, daughter of an Englishwoman and a German waiter, and widow of an Italian courier, who was equal to all land emergencies, and could speak any language. She belonged to the young ladies. Their mother, not liking strangers about her, had, on old nurse's death, caused Emma to learn enough of the lady's maid's art for her own needs at home, and took care of herself abroad.

Babie was enraptured to be going to Mother Carey and Armine, and Elvira was enchanted to leave the schoolroom behind her, being fully aware that she always had more notice and indulgence from outsiders than at home, or indeed from anyone who had been disappointed at her want of all real affection.

"You are just like a dragon fly," said Babie to her; "all brightness outside and nothing within."

This unusually severe remark came from Babie's indignation at Elvira's rebellion against going to River Hollow to take leave. It would be a melancholy visit, for her grandfather had become nearly imbecile since he had had a paralytic stroke, in the course of the winter, and good sensible Mrs. Gould had died of fever in the previous autumn.

Elvira, who had never liked the place, now loathed

it, and did not seem capable of understanding Babie's outburst.

"Not like to go and see them when they are ill and unhappy! Elfie, how can you?"

"Of course I don't! Grandpapa kisses me and makes me half sick."

"But he is so fond of you."

"I wish he wasn't then. Why, Babie, are you going to cry? What's the matter?"

"It is very silly," said Babie, winking hard to get rid of her tears; "but it does hurt me so to think of the good old gentleman caring more for you than anybody, and you not liking to go near him."

"I can't see what it matters to you," said Elvira; "I wish you would go instead of me, if you are so fond of him."

"He wouldn't care for me," said Babie; "I'm not his ain lassie."

"*His* lassie! I'm a lady," exclaimed the señorita, with the haughty Spanish turn of the neck peculiar to herself.

"That's not what I mean by a lady," said Babie.

"What do you mean by it?" said Elvira, with a superior air.

"One who never looks down on anybody," said Babie, thoughtfully.

"What nonsense!" rejoined the Elf; "as if any lady could like to hear grandpapa maunder, and

Mary scold and scream at the farm people, just like the old peahen."

"Miss Ogilvie said poor Mary was overstrained with having more to attend to than she could properly manage, and that made her shrill."

"I know it makes her very disagreeable ; and so they all are. I hate the place, and I don't see why I should go," grumbled Elvira.

"You will when you are older, and know what proper feeling is," said Miss Ogilvie, who had come within earshot of the last words. "Go and put on your hat ; I have ordered the pony carriage."

"Shall I go, Miss Ogilvie ?" asked Babie, as Elfie marched off sullenly, since her governess never allowed herself to be disobeyed.

"I think I had better go, my dear ; Elfie may be under more restraint with me."

"Please give old Mr. Gould and Mary and Kate my love, and I will run and ask for some fruit for you to take to them," said Babie, her tender heart longing to make compensation.

Miss Ogilvie and her pouting companion were received by a fashionable—nay, extra fashionable-looking person, whom Mary and Kate Gould called Cousin Lisette, and the old farmer, Eliza Gould. While the old man in his chair in the sun in the hot little parlour caressed, and asked feeble repetitions of questions of his impatient granddaughter, the lady explained that she had thrown up an excellent

situation as instructress in a very high family to act in the same capacity to her motherless little cousins. She professed to be enchanted to meet Miss Ogilvie, and almost patronised.

"I know what the life is, Miss Ogilvie, and how one needs companionship to keep up one's spirits. Whenever you are left alone, and would drop me a line, I should be quite delighted to come and enliven you ; or whenever you would like to come over here, there's no interruption by uncle ; and he, poor old gentleman, is quite—quite *passé*. The children I can always dismiss. Regularity is my motto, of course, but I consider that an exception in favour of my own friends does no harm, and indeed it is no more than I have a right to expect, considering the sacrifices that I have made for them. Mary, child, don't cross your ankles ; you don't see your cousin do that. Kate, you go and see what makes Betsy so long in bringing the tea. I rang long ago."

"I will go and fetch it," said Mary, an honest, but harassed-looking girl.

"Always in haste," said Miss Gould, with an effort at good humour, which Miss Ogilvie direfully mistrusted. "No, Mary, you must remain to entertain your cousin. What are servants for but to wait on us ? She thinks nothing can be done without her, Miss Ogilvie, and I am forced to act repression sometimes."

"Indeed we do not wish for any tea," said Miss

Ogilvie, seeing Elvira look as black as thunder ; "we have only just dined."

"But Elfie will have some sweet-cake ; Elfie likes auntie's sweet-cake, eh ?" said the old man.

"No, thank you," said Elfie, glumly, though in fact she did care considerably for sweets, and was always buying bonbons.

"No cake ! Or some strawberries—strawberries and cream," said her grandfather. "Mr. Allen always liked them. And where is Mr. Allen now, my dear ?"

"Gone to Norway. It's the fifth time I've told him so," muttered Elvira.

"And where is Mr. Robert ? And Mr. Lucas ?" he went on. "Fine young gentlemen all of them ; but Mr. Allen is the pleasant-spoken one. Ain't he coming down soon ? He always looks in and says, 'I don't forget your good cider, Mr. Gould,' " and there was a feeble chuckling laugh and old man's cough.

"Do let me go into the garden ; I'm quite faint," cried Elvira, jumping up.

It was true that the room was very close, rather medicinal, and not improved by Miss Gould's perfumes ; but there was an alacrity about Elfie's movements, and a vehemence in the manner of her rejection of the said essences, which made her governess not think her case alarming, and she left her to the care of the young cousins, while trying to make up for her incivility by courteously listening to

and answering her grandfather, and consuming the tea and sweet-cake.

When she went out to fetch her pupil to say good-bye, Miss Gould detained her on the way to obtain condolence on the "dreadful trial that old uncle was," and speak of her own great devotion to him and the children, and the sacrifices she had made. She said she had been at school with Elvira's poor mamma, "a sweetly pretty girl, poor dear, but so indulged."

And then she tried to extract confidences as to Mrs. Brownlow's intentions towards the child, in which of course she was baffled.

Elvira was found ranging among the strawberries, with Mary and Kate looking on somewhat dissatisfied.

Both the poor girls looked constrained and unhappy, and Miss Ogilvie wondered whether "Cousin Lisette's" evident intentions of becoming a fixture would be for their good or the reverse.

"Are you better, my dear?" asked she, affectionately.

"Yes, it was only the room," said Elvira.

"You are a good deal there, are not you?" said Miss Ogilvie to Mary, who had the white flabby look of being kept in an unwholesome atmosphere.

"Yes," said Mary, wistfully, "but grandpapa does not like having me half so much as Elvira. He is always talking about her."

"You had better come back to him now, Elfie," said Miss Ogilvie.

"It makes me ill," said Elvira, with her crossest look.

Her governess laid her hand on her shoulder, and told her in a few decided words, in the lowest possible voice, that she was not going away till she had taken a properly respectful and affectionate leave of her grandfather. Whereupon she knew further resistance was of no use, and going hastily to the door of the room, called out—

"Good-bye, then, grandpapa."

"Ah! my little beauty, are you there?" he asked, in a tone of bewildered pleasure, holding out the one hand he could use.

Elvira was forced to let herself be held by it. She hoped to kiss his brow, and escape; but the poor knotted fingers which had once been so strong, would not let her go, and she had to endure many more kisses and caresses and blessings than her proud thoughtless nature could endure before she made her escape. And then "Cousin Lisette" insisted on a kiss for the sake of her dear mamma; and Elfie could only exhale her exasperation by rushing to the pony-carriage, avoiding all kisses to her young cousins, taking the driving seat, and whipping up the ponies more than their tender-hearted mistress would by any means have approved.

Miss Ogilvie abstained from either blame or argument, knowing that it would only make her worse; and recollecting the old Undine theory, wondered

whether the Elf would ever find her soul, and think with tender regret of the affection she was spurning.

The next day the travellers started, sleeping a couple of nights in Hyde Corner, for convenience of purchases and preparations.

They were to meet Mrs. Evelyn at the station ; but Janet, who foretold that she would be another Serene Highness, soured by having missed the family title, retarded their start till so late that there could be no introduction on the platform ; but seats had to be rushed for, while a servant took the tickets.

However, a tall, elderly, military-looking gentleman with a great white moustache, was standing by the open door of a carriage.

“Miss Brownlow,” said he, handing them in—Babie first, next Janet, and then Elvira.

He then bowed to Miss Ogilvie, took his seat, handed in the appurtenances, received, showed, and pocketed the tickets, negotiated Janet’s purchase of newspapers, and constituted himself altogether cavalier to the party.

Sir James Evelyn ! Janet had no turn for soldiers, and was not gratified ; but Elvira saw that her blue eyes and golden hair were producing the effect she knew how to trace ; so she was graciously pleased to accept *Punch*, and to smile a bewitching acceptance of the seat assigned to her opposite to the old general.

Barbara was opposite to Mrs. Evelyn, and next to Sydney, a girl a few months older than herself, but

considerably taller and larger. Mother and daughter were a good deal alike, save that the girl was fresh, plump, and rosy, and the mother worn, with the red colouring burnt as it were into her thin cheeks. Yet both looked as if smiles were no strangers to their lips, though there were lines of anxiety and sorrow traced round Mrs. Evelyn's temples. Their voices were sweet and full, and the elder lady spoke with a tender intonation that inspired Babie with trustful content and affection, but caused Janet to pass a mental verdict of "Sugared milk and water."

She immersed herself in her *Pall Mall*, and left Babie to exchange scraps of intelligence from the brother's letters, and compare notes on the journey.

By-and-by Mrs. Evelyn retired into her book, and the two little girls put their heads together over a newly-arrived acrostic, calling on Elfie to assist them.

"Do *you* like acrostics?" she said, peeping up through her long eyelashes at the old general.

"Oh, don't tease Uncle James," hastily interposed Sydney, as yet inexperienced in the difference between the importunities of a merely nice-looking niece, and the blandishments of a brilliant stranger. Sir James said kindly—

"What, my dear?"

And when Elvira replied—

"Do help us to guess this. What does man love most below?" he put on a droll face, and answered—

"His pipe."

"O Uncle James, that's too bad," cried Sydney.

"If Jock had made this acrostic, it might be pipe," said Babie ; "but this is Armine's."

It was thereupon handed to the elders, who read, in a boyish hand-writing—

Twins, parted from their rocky nest,
We run our wondrous race,
And now in tumult, now at rest,
Flash back heaven's radiant face.

1. While both alike *this* name we bear,
And both like life we flow,
2. And near us nestle sweet and fair
What man most loves below.

Alike it is our boasted claim
To nurse the precious juice

3. That maddened erst the Theban dame,
With streaming tresses loose.
4. The evening land is sought by one,
One rushes towards midday,
One to a vigil song has run,
One heard Red Freedom's lay.

Tall castles, glorious battlefields
Graced *this* in ages past,
But now its mighty power *that* yields

5. To work my busy last.

"Is that your brother Armine's own?" asked Sir James, surprised.

"O yes," said Janet with impressive carelessness, "all my brothers have a facility in stringing rhymes."

"Not Bobus," said Elvira.

"He does not think it worth while," said Janet,

again absorbing herself in her paper, while the public united in guessing the acrostic ; and the only objection was raised by the exact General, who would not allow that the "Marseillaise" was sung at the mouth of the Rhone, and defended Ino's sobriety.

Barbara and Sydney lived upon those acrostics in their travelling bags till they reached Folkestone, and had grown intimate over them. Sir James looked after the luggage, putting gently aside Janet's strong-minded attempt to watch over it, and she only retained her own leathern travelling case, where she carried her personals, and which, heavy as it was, she never let out of her immediate charge.

They all sat on deck, for there was a fine smooth summer sea, and no one was deranged except the two maids, whom every one knew to be always disabled on a voyage.

Janet had not long been seated, and was only just getting immersed in her *Contemporary*, when she received a greeting which gratified her. It was from somewhat of a lion, the author of some startling poems and more startling essays much admired by Bobus, who had brought him to some evening parties of his mother's, not much to her delectation, since there were ugly stories as to his private character. These were ascribed by Bobus to pious malevolence, and Janet had accepted the explanation, and cultivated a bowing acquaintance.

Hyde Corner was too agreeable a haunt to be

despised, and Janet owed her social successes more to her mother's attractions than her own. Conversation began by an inquiry after her brothers, whose adventures had figured in the papers, and it went on to Janet's own journey and prospects. Her companion was able to tell her much that she wanted to know about the university of Zurich, and its facilities for female study. He was a well-known advocate of woman's rights, and she scrupled not to tell him that she was inquiring on her own account. Many men would have been bored, and have only sought to free themselves from this learned lady, but the present lion was of the species that prefer roaring to an intelligent female audience, without the rough male argumentative interruption, and Janet thus made the voyage with the utmost satisfaction to herself.

Mrs. Evelyn asked Babie who her sister's friend was. The answer was, "Do you know, Elfie? You know so many more gentlemen than I do."

"No," replied Elvira, "I don't. He looks like the stupid sort of man."

"What is the stupid sort of man?" asked the General, as she intended.

"Oh! that talks to Janet."

"Is everyone that talks to Janet stupid?"

"Of course," said Elvira. "They only go on about stupid things no better than lessons."

Sir James laughed at her arch look, and shook his head at her, but then made a tour among the other

passengers, leaving her pouting a little at his desertion. On his return, he sat down by his sister-in-law and mentioned a name, which made her start and glance an inquiry whether she heard aright. Then as he bent his head in affirmation, she asked, "Is there anything to be done?"

"It is only for the crossing, and she is quite old enough to take care of herself."

"And it is evidently an established acquaintance, for which I am not responsible," murmured Mrs. Evelyn to herself.

She was in perplexity about these friends of her son's. Ever since Cecil had been at Eton, his beloved Brownlow had seemed to be his evil genius, whose influence none of his resolutions or promises could for a moment withstand. If she had acted on her own judgment, Cecil would never have returned to Eton, but his uncle disapproved of his removal, especially with the disgrace of the champagne supper unretrieved; and his penitent letter had moved her greatly. Trusting much to her elder son and to Dr. Medlicott, she had permitted the party to continue together, feeling that it might be life or death to that other fatherless boy in whom Duke was so much interested; and now she was going out to judge for herself, and Sir James had undertaken to escort her, that they might together come to a decision whether the two friends were likely to be doing one another good or harm.

Mrs. Evelyn had lived chiefly in the country since

her husband's death, and knew nothing of Mrs. Joseph Brownlow. So she looked with anxiety for indications of the tone of the family who had captivated not only Cecil, but Fordham, and seemed in a fair way of doing the same by Sydney. The two hats, brown and black, were almost locked together all the voyage, and indeed the feather of one once became entangled with the crape of the other, so that they had to be extricated from above. There was perhaps a little maternal anxiety at this absorption ; but as Sydney was sure to pour out everything at night, her mother could let things take their course, and watch her delight in expanding, after being long shut up in a melancholy house without young companions.

Elvira had a tone of arch simplicity which, in such a pretty creature, was most engaging, and she was in high spirits with the pleasure of being with new people, away from her schoolroom and from England, neither of which she loved, so she chattered amiably and amusingly, entertained Mrs. Evelyn, and fascinated Sir James.

Janet and her companion were less complacently regarded. Certainly the girl (though less ancient-looking at twenty-one than at fourteen) had the air of one well used to independence, so that she was no great subject for responsibility ; but she gave no favourable impression, and was at no pains to do so. When she rejoined the party, Mrs. Evelyn asked whether she had known that gentleman long.

"He is a friend of my brother Robert," she answered. "Shall I introduce you?"

Mrs. Evelyn declined in a quiet civil tone, that provoked a mental denunciation of her as strait-laced and uncharitable, and as soon as the gentleman returned to the neighbourhood, Janet again sought his company, let him escort her ashore, and only came back to the others in the refreshment-room, whither she brought a copy of a German periodical which he had lent her. With much satisfaction Mrs. Evelyn filled the railway carriage with her own party, so that there was no room for any addition to their number. Nor indeed did they see any more of their unwelcome fellow-traveller, since he was bound for the Hotel du Louvre, and, to Janet's undisguised chagrin, rooms were already engaged at the Hotel Castiglione.

They came too late for the *table d'hôte*, and partook of an extemporised meal in their sitting-room immediately on their arrival, as the start was to be early. Then it was that Janet missed her bag, her precious bag! Delrio was sent all over the house to make inquiries whether it had been taken to any other person's room, but in vain. Mrs. Evelyn said she had last seen it when they took their seats on board the steamer.

"Yes," added Elvira, "you left it there when you went to walk up and down with that gentleman."

"Then why did not you take care of it? I don't

mean Elfie—nobody expects her to be of any use ; but you, Babie ? ”

“ You never told me ! ” gasped Babie, aghast.

“ You ought to have seen ; but you never think of anything but your own chatter. ”

“ It is a very inconvenient loss, ” said Mrs. Evelyn, kindly. “ Have you sent to the station ? ”

“ I shall, as soon as I am satisfied that it is not here. I can send out for the things I want for use ; but there are books and papers of importance, and my keys. ”

“ The key of mother’s davenport ? ” cried Babie. “ Was it there ? O Janet, Janet ! ”

“ You should have attended to it, then, ” said Janet sharply.

Delrio knocked at the door with an account of her unsuccessful mission, and Sir James, little as the young lady deserved it, concerned himself about sending to the station, and if the bag were not forthcoming there, telegraphing to Boulogne the first thing in the morning.

While Janet was writing particulars and volubly instructing the commissionaire, Mrs. Evelyn saw Babie’s eyes full of tears, and her throat swelling with suppressed sobs. She held out an arm and drew the child to her, saying kindly, “ I am sure you would have taken care of the bag if you had been asked, my dear. ”

“ It’s not that, thank you, ” said Babie, laying her

head on the kind shoulder, "for I don't think it was my fault; but mother will be so sorry for her key. It is the key of her davenport, and father's picture is there, and grandmamma's, and the card with all our hairs, and she will be so sorry."

And Babie cried the natural tears of a tired child, whom anything would overcome after her long absence from her mother. Mrs. Evelyn saw how it was, and, as Delrio was entirely occupied with the hue and cry, she herself took the little girl away, and helped her to bed, tenderly soothing and comforting her, and finding her various needments. Among them were her "little books," but they could not be found, and her eyes looked much too tired to use them, especially as the loss again brought the ready moisture. "My head feels so funny, I can't think of anything," she said.

"Shall I do as I used when Sydney was little?" and Mrs. Evelyn knelt down with her, and said one or two short prayers.

Babie murmured her thanks, nestled up to her and kissed her, but added imploringly, "My Psalm. Armie and I always say our Psalm at bed-time, and think of each other. He did it out on the moraine."

"Will it do if you lie down and I say it to you?"

There was another fond, grateful nestling kiss, and some of the Psalms were gone through in the soft, full cadences of a voice that had gained unconscious

pathos by having many times used them as a trustful lullaby to a weary sufferer.

If Babie heard the end, it was in the sweetness of sleep, and when Mrs. Evelyn left her, it was with far less judicial desire to inquire into the subject of that endless conversation which had lasted, with slight intermission, from London to Paris. She was not long left in ignorance, for no sooner had Sydney been assured that nothing ailed Barbara but fatigue, than she burst out, "Mamma, she is the nicest girl I ever saw."

"Do you like her better than Elvira?"

"Of course I do," most emphatically. "Mamma, she loves Sir Kenneth of the Leopard as much as I do."

Mrs. Evelyn was satisfied. While Sir Kenneth of the Leopard remained the object of the young ladies' passion, there was not much fear of any nonsense that was not innocent and happy.

No news of the bag. Janet was disposed to go back herself or send Delrio, but Sir James declared this impossible; nor would the Evelyns consent to disturb the plan of the journey, and disappoint those who expected them at Engelberg on Saturday by waiting at Paris for tidings. Janet in vain told herself that she was not under their control, and tried to remain behind by herself with her maid. They had a quiet, high-bred decisive way of taking things for granted, and arranging for her, and she found herself

unable to resist ; but whenever, in after times, she was unpleasantly reminded of her loss, she always charged it upon them.

Otherwise the journey was prosperous. Elfie was on the terms of a saucy pet with the General, and Babie's bright, gentle courtesy and unselfishness won Mrs. Evelyn's heart, while she and Sydney were as inseparable as ever.

In fact Sydney had been made free of Jotapata. That celebrated romance had been going on all these years with the elision of several generations ; because though few members of the family were allowed to see their twenty-fifth year, it was impossible to squeeze them all into the crusading times ; and besides the reigning favourites must be treated to an adventure with Cœur de Lion.

Even thus abridged, it bade fair to last throughout the journey, both the little maidens being sufficiently experienced travellers to care little for the sights from the French railway, and being only stimulated to talk and listen the more eagerly when interrupted by such trifles as meals, companions, and calls to look at objects far less interesting.

"Look, my dears ; we are coming to the mountains. There is the first snowy head."

"Yes, mamma," but the hats were together again in the corner.

"Come, Sydney, don't lose this wonderful winding valley."

"I see, Uncle James. Beautiful!" popping back instantly with, "Go on, Babie, dear. How did Sir Gilbert get them out of that horrid defile full of Turks? It is true, you said."

"True that Louis VII. and Queen Eleanor got into that dreadful mess. Armine found it in Sismondi, but nobody knew who Sir Gilbert was except ourselves; and we are quite sure he was Sir Gilbert of the Ermine, the son of the brother who thought it his duty to stay at home."

"Sir Philibert? Oh, yes! I know."

"There are some verses about the Iconium Pass, written out in our spotted book, but I can say some of them."

"Oh, do!"

" 'The rock is steep, the gorge is deep,
Mount Joye St. Denys;
But King Louis bold his way doth hold,
Mount Joye St. Denys.

Ho ho, the ravine is narrow I ween,
Lah billah el billah, hurrah.
The hills near and far the Frank's way do bar,
Lah billah el billah, hurrah.'

"It ought to be 'Allah el Allah,' but you know that really does mean a holy name, and Armine thought we ought not to have it. It was delightful making the ballad, for all the Christian verses have 'Mount Joye St. Denys' in the different lines, and all

the Turkish ones 'Lah billah,' till Sir Gilbert comes in, and then his war-cry does instead—

“ ‘On, on, ye Franks, hew down their ranks,
Up, merry men, for the Ermine !
For Christian right 'gainst Pagan might,
Up, merry men, for the Ermine !’ ”

but one day Jock got hold of it, and wrote a parody on it.”

“ Oh what a shame ! Weren't you very angry ? ”

“ It was so funny, one could not help laughing.

“ ‘Come on, old Turk, you'll find hot work—
Pop goes the weasel !
They cut and run ; my eyes, what fun !—
Pop goes the weasel !’ ”

“ How could you bear it ? I won't hear a bit more. It is dreadful.”

“ Miss Ogilvie says if one likes a thing very much, parodies don't hurt one's love,” said Babie.

“ But what did Sir Gilbert do ? ”

“ He rode up to where Louis was standing with his back against a rock, and dismounted, saying ‘ My liege——’ ”

“ I thought he was an Englishman ? ”

“ Oh, but you always called a king ‘ my liege,’ whoever you were. ‘ My liege,’ he said—— ”

“ Look at that charming little church tower.”

“ I see, thank you.”

“ I see, Uncle James. No, thank you, I don't

want to look out any more. I saw it. Well, Babie, 'My liege——' "

"Never mind, James," said Mrs. Evelyn, "one can't be *more* than in Elysium."

There were fewer conveniences for the siege on the last day of the journey, when railroads were no more ; but something could be done on board the steamer in spite of importunities from those who thought it a duty to look at the shores of the Lake of Lucerne, and when arrival became imminent, happy anticipation inclined Barbara to a blissful silence. Mrs. Evelyn saw her great hazel eyes shining like stars, and began to prefer the transparent mask of that ardent little soul to the external beauty which made Elvira a continual study for an artist.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ANGEL MOUNTAIN.

To your eager prayer, the Voice
Makes awful answer, "Come to Me."
Once for all now seal your choice
With Christ to tread the boisterous sea.

Keble.

THE Leukerbad section of the party had only three days' start of the others, for Jock was not released till after a whole month's course of the baths, and Armine's state fluctuated so much that the journey would not have been sooner possible.

It had been a trying time. While Dr. Medicott thought he could not rouse Mrs. Brownlow to the sense of the little fellow's precarious condition, deadly alarm lay couched in the bottom of her heart, only kept at bay by defiantly cheerful plans and sanguine talk.

Then Jock was depressed, and at his age (and, alas! at many others) being depressed means being cross, and very cross he was to his mother and his friend, and occasionally to his brother, who, in some moods, seemed to him merely a rival invalid and candidate for attention, and whom he now and then threatened with becoming as frightful a muff as Fordham. He

missed Johnny, too, and perhaps longed after Eton. He was more savage to Cecil than to any one else, treating his best attentions with growls, railings, and occasionally showers of slippers, books, and cushions, but, strange as it sounds, the friendship only seemed cemented by this treatment, and this devoted slave evidently preferred being abused by Jock to being made much of by any one else.

The regimen was very disagreeable to his English habits, and the tedium of the place was great. His mother thought it quite enough to account for his captiousness, and the doctor said it was recovery, but no one guessed how much was due to the good resolutions he had made on the moraine and ratified with Cecil. To no one else had he spoken, but all the more for his reserve did he feel himself bound by the sense of the shame and dishonour of falling back from vows made in the time of danger. No one else was aware of it, but John Lucas Brownlow was not of a character to treat a promise or a resolution lightly. If he could have got out of his head the continual echo of the two lines about the monastic intentions of a certain personage when sick, he would have been infinitely better tempered.

For to poor Jock steadiness appeared renunciation of all "jest and youthful jollity," and religion seemed tedious endurance of what might be important, but, like everything important, was to him very wearisome and uninteresting. To him all zest and pleasure in

life seemed extinguished, and he would have preferred leaving Eton, where he must change his habits and amaze his associates. Indeed, he was between hoping and fearing that all this would there seem folly. But then he would break his word, the one thing that poor half-heathen Jock truly cared about.

Meantime he was keeping it as best he knew how under the circumstances, by minding his prayers more than he had ever done before, trying to attend when part of the service was read on Sundays, and endeavouring to follow the Evelyn sabbatical code, but only succeeding in making himself more dreary and savage on Sunday than on any other day.

By easy journeys they arrived at Engelberg early on a Friday afternoon, and found pleasant rooms in the large hotel, looking out in front on the grand old monastery, once the lord of half the Canton, and in the rear upon pine-woods, leading up to a snow-crowned summit. The delicious scent seemed to bring invigoration in at the windows.

However, Jock and Armine were both tired enough to be sent to bed, if not to sleep, immediately after the—as yet, scantily filled *table d'hôte*. The former was lying dreamily listening to the evening bells of the monastery, when Cecil came in, looking diffident and hesitating.

“I say, Jock,” he began, “did you see that old clergyman at the *table d'hôte*?”

“Was there one?”

"Yes ; and there is to be a Celebration on Sunday."

"O ! Then Armine can have his wish."

"Fordham has been getting the old cleric to talk to your mother about it."

Armine was unconfirmed. The other two had been confirmed just before Easter, but on the great Sunday Jock had followed his brother Robert's example and turned away. He had recollected the omission on that terrible night, and when after a pause Cecil said, "Do you mean to stay ?" he answered rather snap-pishly, "I suppose so."

"I fancied," said Cecil, with wistful hesitation, "that if we were together it would be a kind of seal to——"

Jock actually forced back the words, "Don't humbug," which were not his own, but his ill-temper's, and managed to reply—

"Well, what ?"

"Being brothers in arms," replied Cecil, with shy earnestness that touched the better part of Jock, and he made a sound of full assent, letting Cecil, who had a turn for sentiment, squeeze his hand.

He lay with a thoughtful eye, trying to recall some of the good seed his tutor had tried to sow on a much-trodden way-side, very ready for the birds of the air. The outcome was—

"I say, Evelyn, have you any book of preparation ? Mine is—I don't know where."

Neither his mother, nor Reeves, nor, to do him

justice, Cecil himself, would have made such an omission in his packing, and he was heartily glad to fetch his manual, feeling Jock's reformation his own security in the ways which he really preferred.

Poor Jock, who, whatever he was, was real in all his ways, and could not lead a double life, as his friend too often did, read and tried to fulfil the injunctions of the book, but only became more confused and unhappy than ever. Yet still he held on, in a blind sort of way, to his resolution. He had undertaken to be good, he meant therefore to communicate, and he believed he repented, and would lead a new life—if—if he could bear it.

His next confidence was—

"I say, Cecil, can you get me some writing things? We—at least I—ought to write and tell my tutor that I am sorry about that supper."

"Well, he was rather a beast."

"I think," said Jock, who had the most capacity for seeing things from other people's point of view, "we did enough to put him in a wax. It was more through me than any one else, and I shall write at once, and get it off my mind before to-morrow."

"Very well. If you'll write, I'll sign," said Cecil. "Mother said I ought when I saw her in London, but she didn't order me. She said she left it to my proper feeling."

"And you hadn't any?"

"I was going to stick by you," said Cecil, rather

sulkily ; on which Jock rewarded him with something sounding like—

“What a donkey you can be !”

However, with many writhings and gruntings the letter was indited, and Jock was as much wearied out as if he had taken a long walk, so that his mother feared that Engelberg was going to disagree with him. He had not energy enough to go out in the evening of Saturday to meet the new arrivals, but stayed with Armine, who was in a state of restless joy and excitement, marvelling at him, and provoking him by this surprise as if it were censure.

With his forehead against the window, Armine watched and did his utmost to repress the eagerness that seemed to irritate his brother, and at last gave vent to an irrepressible hurrah.

“There they are ! Cecil has got his sister ! Oh ! and there she is ! Babie—holding on to mother, and that must be Mrs. Evelyn with Fordham—and there’s Elf making up already to the Doctor ! Aren’t you coming down, Jock ?”

“Not I ! I don’t want to see you make a fool of yourself before everybody !—I say—you’ll have to come up stairs again, you know ! Shut the door I say !”—shouted Jock, as he found Armine deaf to all his expostulations, and then getting up, he banged it himself, and then shuffling back to the sofa, put his hands over his face and exclaimed, “There ! What an eternal brute I am !”

A few moments more and the door was open again, and Cecil, with his arm round his sister, thrust her forwards, exclaiming—

“Here he is, Syd.”

Jock had recovered his gentlemanly manners enough to shake hands courteously, as well as to receive and return Babie's kiss, when she and Armine staggered in together, reeling under their weight of delight. Janet kissed him too, and then, scanning both brothers, observed to her mother—

“I think Lucas is the more altered of the two.” In which sentiment Elvira seemed to agree, for she put her hands behind her and exclaimed—

“O Jock, you do look such a fright ; I never knew how like Janet you were !”

“You are letting every one know what a spiteful little Elf *you* can be,” returned Janet, indignantly.

“Can't you give poor Jock a kinder greeting ?”

Whereupon the Elf put on a cunning look of innocence and said—

“I didn't know it was unkind to say he was like you, Janet.”

The Evelyn pair had gone—after this introduction of Jock and Sydney—to their own sitting-room, which opened out of that of the Brownlows, and the door was soon unclosed, for the two families meant to make up only one party. The two mothers seemed as if they had been friends of old standing, and Mrs. Evelyn was looking with delighted wonder at her eldest son,

who had gained much in flesh and in vigour ever since Dr. Medlicott's last and most successful prescription of a more pressing subject of interest than his own cough.

She had an influence about her that repressed all discords in her presence, and the evening was a cheerful and happy one, leaving a soothing sense upon all.

Then came the awakening to the sounds of the monastery bells, and in due time the small English congregation assembled, and one at least was trying to force an attention that had freely wandered ever before.

The preacher was the chance visitor, an elderly clergyman with silvery hair. He spoke extempore from Job xxviii.

Where shall wisdom be found ?
And where is the place of understanding ?
Man knoweth not the price thereof ;
Neither is it found in the land of the living.
The depth saith, " It is not in me :"
And the sea saith, " It is not with me."
It cannot be gotten for gold.
Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.

What he said was unlike any sermon the young people had heard before. It began with a description of the alchemist's labours, seeking for ever for the one great arcanum, falling by the way upon numerous precious discoveries, yet never finding the one secret which would have rendered all common things capable of being made of priceless value. He drew this quest

into a parable of man's search for the One Great Good, the wisdom that is the one thing necessary to give weight, worth, and value to the life which, without it, is vanity of vanities. Many a choice gift of thought, of science, of philosophy, of beauty, of poetry, has been brought to light in its time by the seekers, but in vain. All rang empty, hollow, and heartless, like sounding brass or tinkling cymbal, till the secret should be won. And it is no unattainable secret. It is the love of Christ that truly turneth all things into fine gold. One who has attained that love has the true transmuting and transforming power of making life golden, golden in brightness, in purity, in value, so as to be "a present for a mighty King."

Then followed a description of the glory and worth of the true, noble, faithful manhood of a "happy warrior," ever going forward and carrying through achievements for the love of the Great Captain. Each in turn, the protector of the weak, the redresser of wrong, the patriot, the warrior, the scholar, the philosopher, the parent, the wife, the sister, or the child, the healthful or the sick, whoever has that one constraining secret, the love of Christ, has his service even here, whether active or passive, veritably golden, the fruit unto holiness, the end everlasting life.

Perhaps it was the cluster of young faces that led the preacher thus to speak, and as he went on, he must have met the earnest and responsive eyes that are sure to animate a speaker, and the power and

beauty of his words struck every one. To the Evelyns it was a new and beautiful allegory on a familiar idea. Janet was divided between discomfort at allusions reminding her of her secret, and on criticisms of the description of alchemy. Her mother's heart beat as if she were hearing an echo of her husband's thoughts about his *Magnum Bonum*. Little Armine was thrilled as, in the awe of drawing near to his first Communion, this golden thread of life was put into his hand. But it was Jock to whom that discourse came like a beam of light into a dark place. When upon the dreary vista of dull abnegation on which he had been dwelling for a month past, came this vision of the beauty, activity, victory, and glory of true manhood, as something attainable, his whole soul swelled and expanded with joyful enthusiasm. The future that he had embraced as lead had become changed to gold ! Thus the whole ensuing service was to him a continuation of that blessed hopeful dedication of himself and all his powers. It was as if from being a monk, he had become a Red Cross Knight of the Hospital. Yet, after his soiled, spoiled, reckless boyhood, how could that grand manhood be attained ?

Later in the afternoon, when the denizens of the hotel had gone their several ways, some to look and listen at Benediction in the Convent church, some to climb through the pine-woods to the Alp, some to saunter and rest among the nearer trees, the clergyman,

with his Greek Testament in his hand, was sitting on a seat under one of the trees, enjoying the calm of one of his few restful Sundays; when he heard a movement, and beheld the pale thin lad, who still walked so lame, who had been so silent at the *table d'hôte*, and whose dark eyes had looked up with such intensity of interest, that he had more than once spoken to them.

"You are tired," said the clergyman, kindly making room for him.

"Thanks," said the boy, mechanically moving forward, but then pausing as he leant on his stick, and his eyes suddenly dimmed with tears as he said, "Oh, sir, if you would only tell me how to begin——"

"Begin what?" said the old man, holding out his hand.

"To turn it to gold," said Jock. "Can I, after being the mad fool I've been?"

They talked for more than an hour; even till Dr. Medicott, coming down from the Alp, laid his hand on Jock's shoulder, and told him the evening chill was coming, and he must sit still no longer. And when the boy looked up, the restless weary distress of his face was gone.

Jock never saw that old clergyman again, nor heard of him, unless it were his death that he read of in the paper six months later. But he never heard the name

of Engelberg without an echo of the parting benediction, and feeling that to him it had indeed been an Angel mountain.

This had been a happy day to several others. Cecil, after ten minutes with his mother, which filled her with hope and thankfulness, had gone to show his sister the charms of the place, and Armine and Babie, on a sheltered seat, were free to pour out their hearts to one another, ranging from the heights of pure childish wisdom to its depths of blissful ignorance and playful folly, as they talked over the past and the future.

Armine knew there was no chance of an immediate and entire recovery for him, and this was a severe stroke to Babie, who was quite unprepared. And, as her face began to draw up with tears near the surface, he hugged her close, and consolingly whispered that now they would be together always, he should not have to go away from his own dear Babie Bunting, and there was a little kissing match, ending by Babie saying, disconsolately, "But you did like Eton so, and you were going to get the Newcastle and the Prince Consort's prize, and to be in the eleven and all—and you were so sure of a high remove! Oh, dear!" and she let her head drop on his shoulder, and was almost crying again.

"Don't, don't, Babie! or you'll make me as bad again," said Armine. "It does come over me now and

then, and I wish I had never known what it was to be strong and jolly, and to expect to do all sorts of things."

"I shall always be wishing it," said Babie.

"No, you are not to cry! You would be more sorry if I was dead, and not here at all, Babie; and you have got to thank God for that."

"I do—I have! I've done it ever since we got Johnny's dreadful letter. Oh, yes, Armine, I'll try not to mind, for perhaps if we aren't thankful, I mayn't keep you at all," said poor Babie, with her arms round her treasure. "But are you quite sure, Armine? Couldn't Dr. Lucas get you quite well? You see this Dr. Medlicott is very young," added the small maiden sapiently.

"Young doctors are all the go. Dr. Lucas said so when mother wrote to ask if she had better bring me home for advice," said Armine. "He knows all about Dr. Medlicott, and said he was first-rate, and they've been writing to each other about me. The doctor stethoscoped me all over, and then he did a map of my lungs, Cecil said, to send in his letter."

"Oh!" gasped Babie, "didn't it frighten you?"

"I wanted to know, for I saw mother was in a way. She did talk and whisk about so fast, and made such a fuss, that I thought I must be much worse than I knew. So I told Dr. Medlicott I wished he would tell me right out if I was going to die, in time to see you, and then I shouldn't mind. So he said not now,

and he thought I should get over it in the end, but that most likely I should have a long time, years perhaps, of being very careful. And when I asked if I should be able to go back to Eton, he said he hardly expected it ; and that he believed it was kinder to let me know at once than let me be straining and hoping on."

"Was it ?" said Babie.

"I thought not," said Armine, "when I shut my eyes and the playing-fields and the trees and the river stood up before me. I thought if I could have hoped ever so little, it would have been nice. And then to think of never being able to run, or row, or stay out late, and always to be bothering about one's stockings and wraps, and making a miserable muff of oneself just to keep in a bit of uncomfortable life, and being a nuisance to everybody."

Babie fairly shrieked and sobbed her protest that he could never be a nuisance to her or mother.

"You are Babie, and mother is mother, I know that ; but it did seem such a long burthen and bore, and when—oh, Babie—don't you know——"

"How we always thought you would go on and be something great, and do something great, like Bishop Selwyn, or like that Mr. Denison that Miss Ogilvie has a book about," said Babie. "But you will get well and do it when you are a man, Armie ! Didn't you think about it when you heard all about the golden life in the sermon to-day ? I thought,

"That's going to be Armie's life," and I looked at you, but you were looking down. Were you thinking how it was all spoilt, Armie, poor dear Armie. For perhaps it isn't."

"No, I know nobody can spoil it but myself," said Armie. "And you know he said that one might make weakness and sickness just as golden, by that great Love, as being up and doing. I was going to tell you, Babie, I was horridly wretched and dismal one day at Leukerbad when I thought mother and all were out of the way—gone out driving, I believe—and then Fordham came in. He had stayed in, I do believe, on purpose——"

"But, but," said Babie, not so much impressed as her brother wished; "isn't he rather a spoon? Johnny said he ought to have been a girl."

"I didn't think Johnny was such a stupid," said Armie, "I only know he has been no end of a comfort to me, though he says he only wants to hinder me from getting like him."

"Don't then," said Babie, "though I don't understand. I thought you were so fond of him."

"So *must* you be," said Armie; "I never got on with anybody so well. He knows just how it is! He says if God gives one such a life, He will help one to find out the way to make the best of it for oneself and other people, and to bear to see other people doing what one can't, and we are to help one another. Oh, Babie! you must like Fordham!"

"I must if you do!" said Babie. "But he is awfully old for a friend for you, Armie."

"He is nineteen," said Armine, "but people get more and more of the same age as they grow older. And he likes all our books, and more too, Babie. He had such a delicious book of French letters, that he lent me, with things in them that were just what I wanted. If we are to be abroad all the winter, he will get his mother to go wherever we do. Suppose we went to the Holy Land, Babie!"

"Oh! then we could find Jotapata! Oh, no," she added, humbly, "I promised Miss Ogilvie not to talk of Jotapata on a Sunday."

"And going to the Holy Land only to look for it would be much the same thing," said Armine. "Besides, I expect it is up among the Druses, where one can't go."

"Armie," in the tone of a great confession, "I've told Sydney all about it. Have you told Lord Fordham?"

"No," said Armine, who was less exclusively devoted to the great romance. "I wonder whether he would read it?"

"I've brought it. Nineteen copybooks and a dozen blank ones, though it was so hard to make Delrio pack them up."

"Hurrah for the new ones! We did so want some for the 'Traveller's Joy,' the paper at Leukerbad was so bad. You *should* hear the verses the Doctor wrote

on the mud baths. They are as stunning as 'Fly Leaves.' Mr. Editor, I say," as Lord Fordham's tall figure strode towards them, "she has brought out a dozen clean copybooks. Isn't that a joy for the 'Joy'?"

"Had you no other intentions for them?" said Fordham, detecting something of disappointment in Babie's face. "You surely were not going to write exercises in them?"

"Oh, no!" said Babie, "only——"

"She can't mention it on Sunday," said Armine, a little wickedly. "It's a wonderful long story about the Crusaders."

"And," explained Babie, "our governess said we—that is I—thought of nothing else, and made the Lessons at Church and everything else apply to it, so she made me resolve to say nothing about it on Sunday."

"And she has brought out nineteen copybooks full of it," added Armine.

"Yes," said Babie, "but the little speckled ones are very small, and have half the leaves torn out, and we used to write larger when we began. I think," she added, with the humility of an aspirant contributor towards the editor of a popular magazine, "if Lord Fordham would be so kind as to look at it, Armie thought it might do what people call, I believe, supplying the serial element of fiction, and I should be happy to copy it out for each number, if I write well enough."

“The word ‘happy,’ was so genuine, and the speech so comical, that the Editor had much ado to keep his countenance as he gave considerable hopes that the serial element should be thus supplied in the MS. magazine.

Meantime, the two mothers were walking about and resting together, keeping their young people in some degree in view, and discussing at first the subject most on their minds, their sons’ bodily health, and the past danger, for which Caroline found a deeply sympathetic listener, and one who took a hopeful view of Armine.

Mrs. Evelyn was indeed naturally disposed to augur well whenever the complaint was not hereditary, and she was besides in excellent spirits at the very visible progress of both her sons, the one in physical, the other in moral health, and she could not but attribute both to the companionship that she had been so anxious to prevent. She had never seen Duke look so well, nor seem so free from languor and indifference since he was a mere child, and all seemed due to his devotion to Armine ; while as to Cecil, he seemed to have a new spring of improvement, which he ascribed altogether to his friend.

“It is strange to me to hear this of my poor Jock,” said Caroline, “always my pickle and scapegrace, though he is a dear good-hearted boy. His uncle says it is that he wants a strong hand, but don’t you

think an uncle's strong hand is much worse than any mother's weakness?"

"Not than her weakness," said Mrs. Evelyn. "It is her love, I think, that you mean. There are some boys with whom strong hands are vain, but who will guide themselves for love, and *that* we mothers are surely the ones to infuse."

"My boys are affectionate enough, dear fellows," said Caroline proudly, forgetting her sore disappointment that neither Allen nor Robert had chosen to come to her help.

"I did not only mean love of oneself," said Mrs. Evelyn, gently. "I was thinking of the fine gold we heard of this morning. When our boys once have found that secret, the chief of our work is done."

"Ah! and I never understood how to give them that," said Caroline. "We have been all astray ever since their father left us."

"Do you know," said Mrs. Evelyn, with a certain sweet shyness, "I can't help thinking that your dear Lucas found that gold among the stones of the moraine, and will help my poor weak Cecil to keep a fast hold of it."

Mrs. Evelyn's opinion was confirmed, when a few days later came the answer to Jock's letter to his tutor, pleasing and touching both friends so much that each showed it to his mother. Another important piece of intelligence came in a letter from John to his cousin, namely that the present Captain of the house, with

two or three more "fellows," were leaving Eton at the Midsummer holidays, and that his tutor had been talking to him about becoming Captain.

Jock and Cecil greatly rejoiced, for the departing Captain had been a youth whose incapacity for government had been much better known to his subordinates than to his master, and the other two had been the special tempters and evil geniuses of the house, those who above all had set themselves to make obedience and religion seem contemptible, and vice daring and manly.

"I should have hated the notion of being Captain," wrote John, "if those impracticable fellows had stayed on, and if I did not feel sure of you and Evelyn. You are such a fellow for getting hold of the others, but with you two at my back, I really think the house may get a different tone into it."

"And every one told us what an excellent character it had," said Mrs. Evelyn, when the letter, through a chain of strict confidence, came round to her, the boys little knowing how much it did to decide their continuance together, and at Eton. Sir James had never been willing that Cecil should be taken away, and he had become as sensible as any of the rest to the Brownlow charm.

That was a very happy time in the pine-woods and the Alp. The whole of the nineteen copy books were actually read by Babie to Sydney and Armine ; and Lord Fordham, over his sketches, submitted to hear a

good deal. He told his mother that the story was the most diverting thing he had ever heard, with its queer mixture of childish simplicity and borrowed romance, of natural poetry and of infantine absurdity, of extraordinary knowledge and equally comical ignorance, of originality and imitation, so that his great difficulty had been not to laugh in the wrong place, when Babie had tears in her eyes at the heights of pathos and sublimity, and Sydney was shedding them for company. It was funny to come to places where Armine's slightly superior age and knowledge of the world began to tell, and when he corrected and criticised, or laughed, with appeals to his elder friend. Babie was so perfectly good-humoured about the sacrifice of her pet passages, and even of her dozen copybooks, that the editor of the "Traveller's Joy" could not help encouraging the admission of "Jotapata" into the magazine, in spite of the remonstrances of the rest of his public, who declared it was merely making the numbers a great deal heavier for postage, and all for nothing.

The magazine was well named, for it was a great resource. There were illustrations of all kinds, from Lord Fordham's careful water-colours, and Mrs. Brownlow's graceful figures or etchings, to the doctor's clever caricatures and grotesque outlines, and the contributions were equally miscellaneous. There were descriptions of scenery, fragmentary notes of history and science, records more or less veracious or absurd

of personal adventures, and conversations, and advertisements, such as—

Stolen or strayed.—A parasol, white above, black below, minus a ring, with an ivory loop handle, and one broken whalebone. Whoever will bring the same to the Señora Donna Elvira de Menella, will be handsomely rewarded with a smile or a scowl, according to her mood.

Lost.—On the walk from the Alp, of inestimable value to the owner, and none to any one else, an Idea, one of the very few originated by the Honble. C. F. Evelyn.

Small wit went a good way, and personalities were by no means prohibited, since the editor could be trusted to exercise a safe discretion in the riddles, acrostics, and anagrams deposited in the bag at his door; and immense was the excitement when the numbers were produced, with a pleasing irregularity as to time, depending on when they became bulky enough to look respectable, and not too thick to be sewn up comfortably by the great Reeves, who did not mind turning his hand to anything when he saw his lordship so merry.

The only person who took no interest in the "Traveller's Joy" was Janet, who could not think how reasonable people could endure such nonsense. Her first affront had been taken at a most absurd description which Jock had illustrated by a fancy caricature of "The Fox and the Crow," "Woman's Progress," in which "Mr. Hermann Dowsterswivel" was represented as haranguing by turns with her on the steamer, and,

during her discourse, quietly secreting her bag. It was such wild fun that Lord Fordham never dreamt of its being an affront, nor perhaps would it have been, if Dr. Medlicott would have chopped logic, science, and philosophy with her in the way she thought her due from the only man who could be supposed to approach her in intellect. He however took to chaff. He *would* defend every popular error that she attacked, and with an acumen and ease that baffled her, even when she knew he was not in earnest, and made her feel like Thor, when the giant affected to take three blows with Miölner for three flaps of a rat's tail.

The magazine contained a series of notes on the nursery rhymes, where the "Song of Sixpence" was proved to be a solar myth. The pocketful of rye was the yield of the earth, and the twenty-four blackbirds sang at sunrise while the king counted out the golden drops of the rain, and the queen ate the produce, while the maid's performance in the garden was, beyond all doubt, symbolic of the clouds suddenly broken in upon by the lightning!

Moreover the man of Thessaly was beautifully illustrated, blinding himself by jumping into the prickly bush of science, where each gooseberry was labelled with some pseudo study. When he *saw* his eyes were out, he stood wondrously gazing after them with his sockets while they returned a ludicrous stare from the points of thorns, like lobsters. In his final

leap deeper into truth, he scratched them in again, and walked off, in a crown of laurels, triumphant.

Janet was none the less disposed to leap into her special gooseberry-bush ; and her importunity prevailed, so that before Dr. Medicott returned to England he escorted her and her mother to Zurich. Then after full inquiries it was decided that she should have her will, and follow out her medical course of study, provided she could find a satisfactory person to board with.

She proposed, and her mother consented, that the two Miss Rays should be her chaperons, of course with liberal payment. Nita could carry on her studies in art, and made the plan agreeable to Janet, while old Miss Ray's eyes, which had begun to suffer from the copying, would have a rest, and Mrs. Brownlow had as much confidence in her as in any one Janet would endure.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAND OF AFTERNOON.

And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave, we will no longer roam."

Tennyson.

WE must pass over three more years and a half, and take up the scene in the cloistered court of a Moorish house in Algeria, adapted to European habits. The slender columns supporting the horse-shoe arches were trained with crimson passion-flower and bougainvillia, while orange and gardenia blossom scented the air, and in the midst of a pavement of mosaic marbles was a fountain, tinkling coolness to the air which was already heated enough to make it impossible to cross the court without protection from the sunshine even at nine o'clock in the morning.

Mrs. Brownlow had a black lace veil thrown over her head ; and both she and the clergyman with her, in muslin-veiled hat, had large white sunshades.

"Little did we think where we should meet again, and why, Mr. Ogilvie. Do you feel as if you had got into 'Tales of the Alhambra,' or into the 'Tempest'?"

"I hope not to continue in the 'Tempest,' at any rate, after this Argier wedding."

"Though no doubt you feel, as I do, that the world goes very like a game at consequences. Who would ever have put together *The Vicar of Benneton* and *Mary Ogilvie* in the amphitheatre at Constantina, eating lion-steaks. Consequence was, an engaged ring. What the world said, 'Who would have thought it?' "

"The world in my person should say you have been Mary's kindest friend, Mrs. Brownlow. Little did I think, when I persuaded Charles Morgan to give himself six months' rest from his parish by reading with Armine, that this was to be the end of it, though I am sure there is not a man in the world to whom I am so glad to give my sister."

"And is it not delightful to see dear old Mary? She looks younger now than ever she did in her whole life, and has broken out of all her primmy governessy crust. Oh! it has been such fun to watch it, so entirely unconscious as both of them were. Mrs. Evelyn and I gloated over it together, all the more that the children had not a suspicion. I don't think Babie and Sydney realise any one being in love nearer our own times than 'Waverley' at the very latest. They received the intelligence quite as a shock. Allen said, as if they had heard that the Greek lexicon was engaged to the French grammar! It will be their first bridesmaid experience."

"Did they miss the wedding at Kenminster?"

"Yes; Jessie's old General chose to marry her in the depth of winter, when we could not think of going home. You know I have not been at Belforest for four years."

"Four years! I suppose I knew, but I did not realise it."

"Yes. You know there was the first summer, when, just as we got back to London after our Italian winter, poor Armie had such a dreadful attack on the lungs, that Dr. Medlicott said he was in more danger than when he was at Schwarenbach; and, as soon as he could move, we had to take him to Bournemouth, to get strength for going to the Riviera. I can say now that I never did expect to bring him back again! But I am thankful to say he has been getting stronger ever since, and has scarcely had a real drawback."

"Yes, I was astonished to see him looking so well. He would scarcely give a stranger the impression of being delicate."

"They told me last summer in London that the damage to the lungs had been quite outgrown, and that he would only need moderate care for the future. Indeed, we should have stayed at home this year, but last summer twelvemonth there was a fever, and that set on foot a perquisition into our drains at Belforest, and it was satisfactorily proved that we ought by good rights to have been all dead of typhoid long ago. So we turned the workmen in, and they *could*

not of course be got out again. And then Allen fell in love with parquet and tiles, and I was weak enough to think it a good opportunity when all the floors were up. But when a man of taste takes to originality, there's no end of it. Everything has had to be made on purpose, and certain little tiles five times over ; for when they did come out the right shape, they were of a colour that Allen pronounced utter demoralisation. However, we are quite determined to get home this summer, and you and Mary must meet there, and show old Kenminster to Mr. Morgan. Ah ! here she comes, and I shall leave you to enjoy this lucid interval of her while Mr. Morgan is doing his last lessons with the children."

"How exactly like herself!" exclaimed Mr. Ogilvie, as Mrs. Brownlow vanished under one of the arches.

"Like ! yes ; but much more, much better," said Mary, eagerly.

"Ah, do you remember when you told me coming to her was an experiment, and you thought it might be better for the old friendship if you did not accept the situation ?"

"You triumph at last, David ; but I can confess now that for the first four years I held to that opinion, and felt that my poor Carey and I could have loved each other better if our relative situations had been different, and we had not seen so much of one another. My life used to seem to me half-unspoken remonstrance, half-truckling compliance, and nothing

but our mutual loyalty to old times, and dear little Babie's affection, could have borne us through."

"And her extraordinary sweetness and humility, Mary."

"Yes, I allow that. Very few employers would have treated me as she did, knowing how I regretted much that went on in her household. However, when I met her at Pontresina, after the boys' terrible adventure in Switzerland, there was an indefinable change. I cannot tell whether it is owing to the constant being with such a boy as Armine, while he was for more than a year between life and death, or whether it was from the influence of living with Mrs. Evelyn; but she has certainly ever since had the one thing that was wanting to all her sweetness and charm."

"I never thought so!"

"No; but you were never a fair judge. I think she has owed unspeakably much to Mrs. Evelyn, who, so far as I can see, is the first person who, at any rate since the break-up of the original home, made conscientiousness, or indeed religion, appear winning to her, neither stiff, nor censorious, nor goody."

"Is not this close combination of the two families rather odd?"

"I don't think it is. Poor Lord Fordham is very fond of Armine, and he hates the being driven abroad every winter so much, that the meeting Armine is

the only pleasant ingredient. And it has been convenient for Sydney to join our school-room party. I was very glad also, that these last two summers, there have been visits at Fordham. Staying there has given Mrs. Brownlow and the younger ones some insight into what the life at Belforest might be, but never has been ; and they will not be kept out of it any longer."

"Then they are going home !"

"After the London season."

"Why, little Barbara is surely not coming out yet ?"

"No ; but Elvira is."

"Ah ! by the bye, was I not told that I was to have two weddings ?"

"Allen wished it, but the Elf won't hear of it. She says she had no notion of turning into a stupid old married woman before she has had any fun."

"Does she care for him ?"

"I don't think she is capable of caring for any one much. I don't know whether she may ever soften with age ; but——"

"Say it, Mary—out with it."

"I never saw such a heartless little butterfly ! She did not care a rush when her good old grandfather died, and I don't believe she has one fraction more love for Mrs. Brownlow, or Allen, or anybody else. The best thing I can see is that she is too young to perceive the prudence of securing Allen ; but perhaps

that is only frivolity, and he, poor fellow, is so devoted to her, that it is quite provoking to see how she trifles with and torments him."

"Isn't it rather good for the great Mr. Brownlow? Not much besides has contradicted him, I should imagine."

"His mother thinks that it is the perpetual restlessness in which Elvira keeps him that renders him so unsettled, and that if they were once married he would have some peace of mind, and be able to begin life in earnest. But to hurry on the marriage is such a fearful risk, with such a creature as that sprite, that she has persuaded him to wait, and let the child be satisfied by this season in London, that she may not think they are cheating her of her young lady life."

"It is on the cards, I suppose, that she might see some one whom she preferred to him?"

"Which might, in some aspects of the matter, be the best thing possible; but Mrs. Brownlow would have many conscientious scruples about the property and Allen would be in utter despair."

"Though, of course, all this would be far better than exposing that tropical-natured Spanish butterfly to meeting the subject of a grand passion too late," said Mr. Ogilvie.

"Yes; of course that must be in his mother's mind, though I don't suppose she expresses it even to herself. Miss Evelyn is coming out too, and is to be

presented, which reconciles the younger ones to putting off all their schemes for working at Belforest, after the true Fordham and story-book fashion. Besides, Mrs. Brownlow always feels that she has a duty towards Elvira, even apart from Allen."

"And what do you think of Allen? He seems very pleasant and gentlemanly."

"That's just what he is! He has always been as agreeable and nice as possible all these eight years that I have been with them, and has treated me entirely as his mother's old friend. I can't help liking Allen very much, and wondering what he would have been if—if he had had to work for his living—or if Elvira had not been such a little tormenting goose—or if, all manner of ifs—indeed ; but they all resolve themselves into one question if there be much stuff in him !"

"If not, he is the only one of the family without, except, perhaps, Jock."

"Oh ! if you saw Jock now, you would not doubt that there's plenty of substance in him ! He has been a very different person ever since his illness in Switzerland, as full of life and fun as ever, but thoroughly in earnest about doing right. He had an immense number of marks for the army examination, and seems by all accounts to be keeping up to regular work, now that it is more voluntary."

"Is he not rather wasted on the Guards !"

"Well, that was Sir James Evelyn's doing. They

are glad enough to have him there to look after his friend, Mr. Evelyn, and it was one of the cases where the decision for life has to be made before the youth is old enough to understand his full capabilities. I expect Lucas, to give him his right name, will do something distinguished yet, perhaps be a great General; and I hope Sir James has interest enough to get him employment before he has eaten his heart out on drill and parade. Now that Armine's health is coming round, I do leave Caroline very happy about the younger half of her family."

"And the elder half?"

"Well! I sometimes think that there must have been something defective in the management of that excellent doctor and his mother, as if they had never taught the children proper loyal respect for her! The three younger ones have it all right, and the two elder sons are as fond of her as possible; but she never had any authority over those three from the first. Only Allen is too gentle and has too much good taste to show it; while as to the other two, Bobus's contempt is of a kindly, filial, petting description; Janet's, a nasty, defiant, overt disregard."

"Impossible! They could not dare to despise her."

"They do, for the very things that are best in her; and so far I think the Evelyn intercourse has been unlucky, since they ascribe her greater religiousness to what it suits their democratic notions to scorn.

Not that there is much to complain of in Bobus's manner when we do see him. He only uses little stings of satire, chiefly about Lord Fordham. I don't think he would knowingly pain his mother if he could help it ; and for that reason there is a reserve between them."

"He is eating his terms in the Temple, is he not ? And Janet ? Is she studying medicine still ? Does she mean to practise ?"

"I can't make out. She has only been with us twice in these four years, once at Sorrento and once in London ; but she has a very active dislike to Mrs. Evelyn, and vexes her mother by making no secret of it. I believe she is to take her degree at Zurich this spring, but I don't think she means to practise. She is too well off for the drudgery, but she is bent on making researches of some kind, and I think I heard of some plan of her going to attend lectures, to which her degree may admit her, but I am not sure where. The two Miss Rays seem to be happy to escort her anywhere, and that is a sort of comfort to Mrs. Brownlow. Miss Ray keeps us informed of their comings and goings, for Janet seldom deigns to write."

"It is very strange that there should be such alienation, and from such a mother."

"The two characters are as unlike as can be, but I have always thought there must be some cause that no one but Janet herself could perhaps explain. I cannot help thinking that she has some definite

purpose in this study of medicine ; for I do not think it is for the sake either of the emancipation of women or of general philanthropy. They must be an odd party. Miss Ray attends to the household matters, mends the clothes, and pays the bills. Nita sketches, reads at the libraries, and talks at the *table d'hôte*, like a strong minded woman, as she is ; and Janet goes her own way. Bobus looked in on them once and described them to us with great gusto."

There Mary's face became illuminated as a step approached, and a gentleman with grizzled hair, and a thoughtful, gentle face came out, and sat down on her other side.

He had been college tutor to her brother, though not much older, and had stayed on at Oxford, till two years back he had taken a much neglected living. His health had broken down under the severe work of organising, and he had accepted the easy task of reading with Armine Brownlow for the winter in a perfect climate, as a welcome mode of recruiting his strength. He had truly recruited it in an unexpected manner, and was about to take home with him one who would prove such a helpmeet as would lighten all the troubles and difficulties that had weighed so heavily on him, and remove some of them entirely.

So he came out and testified to the remarkable ability and zeal he had found in his pupil, and likewise to the spirit of industry which had prevented the desultory life of travelling and ill-health from having

made him nearly so much behindhand as might have been expected. If he only had health to work steadily for the next two years, he would be quite as well prepared to matriculate at the university as all but the very foremost scholars from the public schools. Mr. Morgan thought his intellect equal to that of his brother Robert, who had taken a double first-class, but of a finer order, being open to those poetical instincts which went for nothing with the materialistic Bobus.

Wherewith the friends fell into conversation more immediately interesting to themselves, while at the other end of the court, sheltered by a great orange-tree, a committee of the "Traveller's Joy" was held.

For that serial still survived, though it could never be called a periodical, since it was an intermittent, and sometimes came out very rapidly, sometimes with intervals of many months ; but it was always sent to, and greatly relished by, the absent members of the original party, at first at Eton, and later, two in their barracks, and one at his college at Oxford, whither, to his great satisfaction, he had gone by means of a well-won scholarship, not at his aunt's expense.

Jotapata's lengthy romance had died a natural death in the winter that had been spent between Egypt and Palestine. So far from picking up ideas from it there, Babie, in the actual sight of Mount Hermon's white crown, had begged not to be put in mind of such nonsense, and had never recurred to it ;

but the wells of fancy had never been dried, and the young people were happily putting together their bits of journal, their bits of history, the description of the great amphitheatre, a poem of Babie's on St. Louis's death, a spirited translation in Scott-like metre of Armine's of the opening of the *Æneid*, also one from the French, by Sydney, on Arab customs, and all Lord Fordham had been able to collect about Hippo, also "The Single Eye," by Allen, and "Marco's Felucca," by Armine and Babie in partnership, and a fair proportion of drollery.

"There was a space left for the wedding, the greatest event the 'Traveller's Joy' had ever had on record," said Sydney, as she touched up the etching at the top of her paper, sitting on a low stool by a low mother-of-pearl inlaid Eastern table.

"The greatest and the last," chimed in Babie, as she worked away at the lace she was finishing for the bride.

"I don't see why it should be the last of the poor old 'Joy,'" said Lord Fordham, sorting the MSS. which were scattered round him on the ground.

"Well, somehow I feel as if we had come to the end of a division of our lives," returned Babie.

"Having done with swaddling bands, eh, Infanta?" said Lord Fordham, while Armine hastily sketched in pen and ink, Babie, with her hair flying and swaddling bands off, executing a war-dance. She did not like it.

"For shame, Armine! Don't you know how dreadful it is to lose dear Miss Ogilvie?"

"Of course, Babie," said her brother, "I didn't think you were such a Babie as not to know that things go by contraries."

"It is too tender a spot for irony, Armie," said Lord Fordham.

"Well," said Armine, "I shall be obliged to do something outrageous presently, so look out!"

"Not really!" said Sydney.

"Yes, really," said Babie, recovering; "I see what he means. He would like to do anything rather than sit and think that this is the last time we shall all be together again in this way."

"I'm sure I don't see why we should not," said Sydney. "To say nothing of meetings in England; Duke and Armine have only to cough three times in October, and we should all go off together again, and be as jolly as ever."

"I don't mean to cough," said Armine, gravely, "I've wasted enough of my life already."

"In our company, eh?" said Sydney, "or are you to be taken by contraries?"

"No," said Armine. "One has duties, and lotus-eating is uncommonly nice, but it won't do to go on for ever. I wouldn't have given in to it this winter if Allen hadn't *floored* us."

"And then when you thought I had got a tutor, and should do some good with him," chimed in Babie,

he must needs go and fall in love and spoil our Miss Ogilvie."

The disgust with which she uttered the words was so comic, that all the others burst out laughing.

And Fordham said—

"The Land of Afternoon was too strong for him. Shall you really pine much for Miss Ogilvie, Infanta?"

"I shall miss her dreadfully," said Babie, "and I think it is very stupid of her to leave mother, whom she has known all her life, and all of us, for a strange man she never saw till four months ago."

"Oh, Babie, you to be the author of a chivalrous romance!" said Fordham.

"I was young and silly then," said the young lady, who was within a month of sixteen.

"And all your romances are to be henceforth without love," said Armine.

"I think they would be much more sensible," said Babie. "Why do you all laugh so? Don't you see how stupid poor Allen always is? And it can even spoil Miss Ogilvie, and make her inattentive."

"Poor Allen," echoed one or two voices, in the same low tone, for as they peeped out beyond the orange-tree, Allen might be seen, extended on a many-coloured rug, in an exceedingly deplorable attitude.

"O yes," said Sydney; "but if one has such a—such a—such an object as *that*, one must expect to be stupid and miserable sometimes!"

"She must have been worrying him again," said Babie.

"O yes, didn't you see?" said Armine. "No, I remember you didn't go out riding early to-day."

"No, I was finishing Miss Ogilvie's wedding lace."

"Well, that French captain, that Elfie went on with at the commandant's ball, came riding up in full splendour, and trotted alongside of her, chattering away, she bowing and smiling, and playing off all her airs, and at last letting him give her a great white flower. Didn't you see it in her breast at breakfast? Poor Allen was looking as if he had eaten wormwood all the time when he was forced to fall back upon me, and I suppose he has been having it out with her and has got the worst of it."

"O, it is that, is it?" said Lord Fordham; "I thought she wanted to pique Allen, she was so *empressee* with me."

"If people will be so foolish as to care for a pretty face," sagely said Sydney.

"You know it is not only that," said Babie; "Allen is bound in honour to marry Elvira, to repair the great injustice. It is a great pity she will not marry him now at once, but I think she is afraid, because then, you know, she would get to have a soul, like Undine, and she doesn't want one yet."

"That's a new view of the case," said Lord Fordham in his peculiar lazy manner, "and taken allegorically it may be the true one."

"But one would like to have a soul," said Sydney.

"I'm not sure," said Babie, with a great look of awe. "One would know it was best, but it would be very tremendous to feel all sorts of thoughts and perceptions swelling up in one."

"If that is the soul," said Armine.

"Which is the soul?" said Babie, "our understanding, or our feelings, or both?"

"Both," said Sydney, undoubtedly.

"I don't know," said Babie. "Poor little Chico has double the heart of his mistress."

"It is quite true," said Fordham. "We may share intellect with demons, but we do share what is called heart with animals."

"I think good animals have a sort of soul," observed Armine.

"And of course, Elvira has a soul," said Sydney, who was getting bewildered.

"Theologically speaking—yes," said Armine, making them all laugh, "and I suppose Undine hadn't. But it was sense and heart that was wanting."

"The heart would bring the sense," said Lord Fordham, "and so we have come round to the Infanta's first assertion that the young lady shrinks from the awakening."

"I'll tell you what she really does care for," said Babie, "and what I believe would waken up her soul much better than marrying poor Allen."

The announcement was so extraordinary that they all turned their heads to listen.

"Her old black nurse at San Ildefonso," said Babie. "I believe going back there would do her all the good in the world."

"There's something in that notion," said Armine. "She is always better-tempered in a hot country."

"Yes," added Babie, "and you didn't see her when somebody advised our trying the West Indies for the winter. Her eyes gleamed, and she panted, and I didn't know what she was going to do. I told mother at night, but she said she was afraid of going there, because of the yellow fever, and that San Ildefonso had been made a coaling station by the Americans, so it would only disappoint her. But Elfie looked—I never saw any one look as she did—fit to kill some one when she found it was given up, and she did not get over it for ever so long."

"Take care ; here's an apparition," said Armine, as a brilliant figure darted out in a Moorish dress, rich jacket, short full white tunic, full trousers tied at the ankles, coins pendulous on the brow, bracelets, anklets, and rows of pearls. It was a dress on which Elvira had set her heart in readiness for fancy balls ; it had been procured with great difficulty and expense, and had just come home from the French *modiste* who had adapted it to European wear.

Allen started up in admiration and delight. Even

Mr. Morgan was roused to make an admiring inspection of the curious ornaments and devices ; and Elvira, with her perfect features, rich complexion, dark blue eyes, Titian coloured hair, fine figure, and Oriental air, formed a splendid study.

Lord Fordham begged her to stand while he sketched her ; and Babie, with Sydney, was summoned to try on the bridesmaids' apparel.

The three girls, Elvira, Sydney, and Barbara acted as bridesmaids the next day, when, in the English chapel, Mr. Ogilvie gave his sister to his old friend, to begin her new life as a clergyman's wife.

What could be called Elvira de Menella's character ? Those who knew her best, such as Barbara Brownlow, would almost have soon have thought of ascribing a personal character to a cloud as to her. She smiled into glorious loveliness when the sun shone ; she was gloomy and thunderous when displeased, and though she had a passionate temper, and could be violent, she had no fixed purpose, but drifted with the external impulse of the moment. She had not much mind or power of learning, and was entirely inattentive to anything intellectual, so that education had not been able at the utmost to do more than fit her to pass in the crowd, and could get no deeper ; and what principles she had it was not easy to tell. Not that she did or said objectionable things, since she had outgrown her childish outbreaks ; but she seemed to have no substance, and to be kept right by

force of circumstances. She had the selfishness of any little child, and though she had never been known to be untruthful, this might be because there was not the slightest temptation to deceive. She was just as much the spoilt child, to all intents and purposes, as if she had been the heiress ; perhaps more so, for Mrs. Brownlow had always been so remorseful for the usurpation as to be extra indulgent—lenient to her foibles, and lavish in gifts and pleasures, even inconveniencing herself for her fancies ; whilst Allen had, from the first, treated her with the devotion of a lover. No stranger had ever supposed that she was not the equal in all respects of the rest of the family, nor had she realised it herself.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOONSHINE.

But still the lady shook her head,
And swore by yea and nay
My whole was all that he had said,
And all that he could say.

W. M. Praed.

MRS. BROWNLOW had intended to go at once to London on her return to England, but the joint entreaties of Armine and Barbara prevailed on her to give them one week at Belforest, now in that early spring beauty in which they had first seen it.

How delightful the arrival was! Easter had been very late, so it was the last week of the vacation, and dear old Friar John's handsome face was the first thing they saw at the station, and then his father's portly form, with a tall pretty creature on each side of him, causing Babie to fall back with a cry of glad amazement, "Oh! Essie and Ellie! Such women!"

Then the train stopped, and there was a tumult of embracings and welcomes, in the midst of which Jock appeared, having just come by the down train.

"You'll all come to dinner this evening?" entreated Caroline. "My love to Ellen. Tell her you must all of you come."

It was a most delightful barouche full that drove from the station. Jock took the reins, and turned over coachman and footman to the break, and in defiance of dignity, his mother herself sprang up beside him. The sky was blue, the hedges were budding with pure light-green above, and resplendent with rosy campion and white spangles of stitchwort below. Stars of anemone, smiling bunches of primrose, and azure clouds of bluebell made the young hearts leap as at that first memorable sight. Armine said he was ready to hurrah and throw up his hat, and though Elvira declared that she saw nothing to be so delighted about, they only laughed at her.

Gorgeous rhododendrons and gay azaleas rose in brilliant masses nearer the house, beds of hyacinths and jonquils perfumed the air, judiciously arranged parterres of gay little Van Thol tulips and white daisies flashed on the eyes of the arriving party, while the exquisite fresh green provoked comparisons with parched Africa.

Bobus was standing on the steps to receive them, and when they had crossed the hall, with due respect to its Roman mosaic pavement, they found the Popinjay bowing, dancing, and chattering for joy, and tea and coffee for parched throats in the favourite Dresden set in the morning room, the prettiest and cosiest in the house.

“How nice it is! We are all together except Janet,” exclaimed Babie.

"And Janet is coming to us in London," said her mother. "Did you see her on her way to Edinburgh, boys?"

"No," said Jock. "She never let us know she was there."

"But I'll tell you an odd thing I have just found out," said Bobus. "It seems she came down here on her way, unknown to anyone, got out at the Woodside station, and walked across here. She told Brock that she wanted something out of the drawers of her library-table, of which the key had been lost, and desired him to send for Higg to break it open; but Brock wouldn't hear of it. He said his Missus had left him in charge, and he could not be answerable to her for having locks picked without her authority—or leastways the Colonel's. He said Miss Brownlow was in a way about it, and said as how it was her own private drawer that no one had a right to keep her out of, but he stood to his colours; he said the house was Mrs. Brownlow's, and under his care, and he would have no tampering with locks, except by her authority or the Colonel's. He even offered to send to Kenminster if she would write a note to my uncle, but she said she had not time, and walked off again, forbidding him to mention that she had been here."

"Janet always was a queer fish!" said Jock.

"Poor Janet, I suppose she wanted some of her notes of lectures," said her mother. "Brock's sound

old house-dog instinct must have been very inconvenient to her. I must write and ask what she wanted."

"But she forbade him to mention it," said Bobus.

"Of course that was only to avoid the fuss there would have been if it had been known that she had been here without coming to Kencroft. By the bye, I didn't tell Brock those good people were coming to dinner. How well the dear old Monk looks, and how charming Essie and Ellie! But I shall never know them apart, now they are both the same size."

"You won't feel that difficulty long," said Bobus. "There really is no comparison between them."

"Just the insipid English Mees," said Elvira. "You should hear what the French think of the ordinary English girl!"

"So much the better," said Bobus. "No respectable English girl would wish for a foreigner's insulting admiration."

"Well done, Bobus! I never heard such an old-fashioned insular sentiment from you. One would think it was your namesake. By the bye, where is the great Rob?"

"At Aldershot," said Jock. "I assure you he improves as he grows older. I had him to dine the other day at our mess, and he cut a capital figure by judiciously holding his tongue and looking such a fine fellow, that people were struck with him."

"There," said Armine, slyly, "he has the seal of the Guards' approval."

Jock could afford to laugh at himself, for he was entirely devoid of conceit, but he added, good humouredly—

"Well, youngster, I can tell you it goes for something. I wasn't at all sure whether the ass mightn't get his head out of the lion-skin."

"Oh, yes! they are all lions and no asses in the Guards," said Babie; whereupon Jock fell on her, and they had a playful skirmish.

Nobody came to dinner but John and his two sisters. It had turned out that the horse had been too much worked to be used again, and there was a fine moon, so that the three had walked over together. Esther and Eleanor Brownlow had always been like twins, and were more than ever so now, when both were at the same height of five feet eight, both had the same thick glossy dark-brown hair, done in the very same rich coils, the same clearly-cut regular profiles, oval faces, and soft carnation cheeks, with liquid brown eyes, under pencilled arches. Caroline was in confusion how to distinguish them, and trusted at first solely to the little coral charms which formed Esther's ear-rings, but gradually she perceived that Esther was less plump and more mobile than her sister—her colour was more variable, and she seemed as timid as ever, while Eleanor was developing the sturdy Friar texture. Their aunt had been the

means of sending them to a good school, and they had a much more trained and less homely appearance than Jessie at the same age, and seemed able to take their part in conversation with their cousins, though Essie was manifestly afraid of her aunt. They had always been fond of Barbara, and took eager possession of her, while John's Oxford talk was welcome to all,—and it was a joyous evening of interchange of travellers' anecdotes and local and family news, but without any remarkable feature till the time came for the cousins to return. They had absolutely implored not to be sent home in the carriage, but to walk across the park in the moonlight ; and it was such a lovely night that when Bobus and Jock took up their hats to come with them, Babie begged to go too, and the same desire strongly possessed her mother, above all when John said, "Do come, Mother Carey ;" and "rowed her in a plaidie."

That youthful inclination to frolic had come on her, and she only waited to assure herself that Armine did not partake of her madness, but was wisely going to bed. Allen was holding out a scarf to Elvira, but she protested that she hated moonlight, and that it was a sharp frost, and she went back to the fire.

As they went down the steps in the dark shadow of the house, John gave his aunt his arm, and she felt that he liked to have her leaning on him, as they walked in the strong contrasts of white light and dark shade in the moonshine, and pausing to look at the

wonderful snowy appearance of the white azaleas, the sparkling of the fountain, and the stars struggling out in the pearly sky; but John soon grew silent, and after they had passed the garden, said—

“Aunt Caroline, if you don’t mind coming on a little way, I want to ask you something.”

The name, Aunt Caroline, alarmed her, but she professed her readiness to hear.

“You have always been so kind to me” (still more alarming, thought she); “indeed,” he added, “I may say I owe everything to you, and I should like to know that you would not object to my making medicine my profession.”

“My dear Johnny!” in an odd, muffled voice.

“Had you rather not?” he began.

“Oh, no! Oh, no, no! It is the very thing. Only when you began I was so afraid you wanted to marry some dreadful person!”

“You needn’t be afraid of that. *Ars Medica* will be bride enough for me till I meet another Mother Carey, and that I sha’n’t do in a hurry.”

“You silly fellow, you aren’t practising the smoothness of tongue of the popular physician.”

“Don’t you think I mean it?” said John, rather hurt.

“My dear boy, you must excuse me. It is not often one gets so many compliments in a breath, besides having one of the first wishes of one’s heart granted.”

“Do you mean that you really wished this?”

“So much that I am saying, ‘Thank God!’ in my heart all the time.”

“Well, my father and mother thought you might be wishing me to be a barrister, or something swell.”

“As if I could—as if I ever could be so glad of anything,” said she with rejoicing that surprised him. “It is the only thing that could make up for none of my own boys taking that line. I can’t tell you now how much depends on it, John, you will know some day. Tell me what put it into your head——”

He told her, as he had told his father nearly four years before, how the dim memory of his uncle had affected him, and how the bent had been decidedly given by his attendance on Jock, and his intercourse with Dr. Medlicott. At Oxford, he had availed himself of all opportunities, and had come out honourably in all examinations, including physical science, and he was now reading for his degree, meaning to go up for honours. His father, finding him steady to his purpose, had consented, and his mother endured, but still hoped his aunt would persuade him out of it. She was so far from any such intention, that a hint of the *Magnum Bonum* had very nearly been surprised out of her. For the first time since Belforest had come to her, did she feel in the course of carrying out her husband’s injunctions ; and she felt strengthened against that attack from Janet to which she looked forward with dread. She talked with

John of his plans till they actually reached the lodge gate, and there found Jock, Babie, and Eleanor chattering merrily about fireflies and glowworms a little way behind, and Bobus and Esther paired together much further back. When all had met at the gate and the parting good-nights had been spoken, Bobus became his mother's companion, and talked all the way home of his great satisfaction at her wandering time being apparently over, of his delight in her coming to settle at home at last, his warm attachment to the place, and his desire to cultivate the neighbouring borough with a view to representing it in Parliament, since Allen seemed to be devoid of ambition, and so much to hate the mud and dust of public life, that he was not likely to plunge into it, unless Elvira should wish for distinction. Then Bobus expatiated on the awkward connection the Goulds would be for Allen, stigmatising the amiable Lisette, who of course by this time had married poor George Gould, as an obnoxious, presuming woman, whom it would be very difficult to keep in her right position. It was not a bad thing that Elvira should have a taste of London society, to make her less likely to fall under her influence.

"That is not a danger I should have apprehended," said Caroline.

"The woman can fawn, and that is exactly what a haughty being like Elvira likes. She is always pining for a homage she does not get in the family."

‘Except from poor Allen.’

“Except from Allen, but that is a matter of course. He is a slave to be flouted! Did you ever see a greater contrast than that between her and our evening guests?”

“Esther and Eleanor? They have grown up into very sweet-looking girls.”

“Not that there can be any comparison between them. Essie has none of the ponderous Highness in her—only the Serenity.”

“Yes, there is a very pleasant air of innocent candour about their faces——”

“Just what it does a man good to look at. It is like going out into the country on a spring morning. And there is very real beauty too——”

“Yes, Kencroft monopolises all the good looks of the family. What a fine fellow the dear old Friar has grown.”

“If you bring out those two girls this year, you will take the shine out of all the other chaperons!”

“I wonder whether your aunt would like it.”

“She never made any objection to Jessie’s going out with you.”

“No. I should like it very much; I wonder I had not thought of it before, but I had hardly realised that Essie and Ellie were older than Babie, but I remember now, they are eighteen and seventeen.”

“It would be so good for you to have something human and capable of a little consideration to go out

with," added Bobus, "not to be tied to the tail of a will-of-the-wisp like that Elf—I should not like that for you."

"I am not much afraid," said Caroline. "You know I don't stand in such awe of the little donna, and I shall have my Guardsman to take care of me when we are too frivolous for you. But it would be very nice to have those two girls, and make it pleasanter for my Infanta, who will miss Sydney a good deal."

"I thought the Evelyns were to be in town."

"Yes, but their house is at the other end of the park, What are Jock and the Infanta looking at?"

Jock and Babie, who were on a good way in advance in very happy and eager conversation, had come to a sudden stop, and now turned round, exclaiming "Look, mother! Here's the original Robin Good-fellow."

And on the walk there was a most ludicrous shadow in the moonlight, a grotesque, dancing figure, with one long ear, and a hand held up in warning. It was of course the shadow of the Midas statue, which the boys had never permitted to be restored to its pristine state. One ear had however crumbled away, but in the shadow this gave the figure the air of cocking the other, in the most indescribably comical manner, and the whole four stood gazing and laughing at it. There was a certain threatening attitude about its hand, which, Jock said, looked as if the ghost of old Barnes had come

to threaten them for the wasteful expenditure of his hoards. Or, as Babie said, it was more like the ghastly notion of Bertram Risingham in Rokeby, of some phantom of a murdered slave protecting those hoards.

"I don't wonder he threatens," said Caroline. "I always thought he meant that audacious trick to have forfeited the hoards."

"Very lucky he was balked," said Bobus, "not only for us, but for human nature in general. Fancy how insufferable that Elf would have been if she had been dancing on gold and silver."

"Take care!" muttered Jock, under his breath. "There's her swain coming; I see his cigar."

"And we really shall have it Sunday morning presently," said his mother, "and I shall get into as great a scrape as I did in the old days of the Folly."

It was a happy Sunday morning. The Vicar of Woodside had much improved the Church and services with as much assistance in the way of money as he chose to ask for from the lady of Belforest, though hitherto he had had nothing more; but he and his sister augured better things when the lady herself with her daughter and her two youngest sons came across the park in the freshness of the morning to the early Celebration. The sister came out with them and asked them to breakfast. Mrs. Brownlow would not desert Allen and Bobus, but she wished Armine to spare himself more walking. Moreover, Babie discovered that some desertion of teachers would render

their aid at the Sunday School desirable on that morning.

This was at present her ideal of Sunday occupation, and she had gained a little fragmentary experience under Sydney's guidance at Fordham. So she was in a most engaging glow of shy delight, and the tidy little well-trained girls who were allotted to her did not diminish her satisfaction. To say that Armine's positive enjoyment was equal to hers would not be true, but he had intended all his life to be a clergyman, and he was resolved not to shrink from his first experience of the kind. The boys were too much impressed, by the apparition of one of the young gentlemen from Belforest, to comport themselves ill, but they would probably not have answered his questions even had they been in their own language, and they stared at him in a stolid way, while he disadvantageously contrasted them with the little ready-tongued peasant boys of Italy. However, he had just found the touch of nature which made the world kin, and had made their eyes light up by telling them of a scene he had beheld in Palestine, illustrating the parable they had been repeating, when the change in the Church bells was a signal for leaving off.

Very happy and full of plans were the two young things, much pleased with the clergyman and his sister, who were no less charmed with the little, bright, brown-faced, lustrous-eyed girl, with her eager yet diffident manner and winning vivacity, and with the

slender, delicate, thoughtful lad, whose grave courtesy of demeanour sat so prettily upon him.

Though not to compare in numbers, size, or beauty with the Kencroft flock, the Belforest party ranged well in their seat at Church, for Robert never failed to accompany his mother once a day, as a concession due from son to mother. It was far from satisfying her. Indeed there was a dull, heavy ache at her heart whenever she looked at him, for however he might endeavour to conform, like Marcus Aurelius sacrificing to the gods, there was always a certain half-patronising, half-criticising superciliousness about his countenance. Yet, if he came for love of her, still something might yet strike him and win his heart ? Had her years of levity and indifference been fatal to him ? was ever her question to herself as she knelt and prayed for him.

She felt encouraged when, at luncheon, she asked Jock to walk with her to Kenminster for the evening service, after looking in at Kencroft, Robert volunteered to be of the party.

Caroline, however, did not think that he was made quite so welcome at Kencroft as his exertion deserved. Colonel and Mrs. Brownlow were sitting in the drawing-room with the blinds down, presumably indulging in a Sunday nap in the heat of the afternoon, for the Colonel shook himself in haste, and his wife's cap was a little less straight than suited her serene dignity, and though they kissed and welcomed the mother, they

were rather short and dry towards Bobus. They said the children had gone out walking, whereupon the two lads said they would try to meet them, and strolled out again.

This left the field free for Caroline to propose the taking the two girls to London with her.

"I am sure," said Ellen, "you have always been very kind to the children. But indeed, Caroline, I did not think you would have encouraged it."

"It?—I don't quite understand," said Caroline, wondering whether Ellen had suddenly taken an evangelically serious turn.

"There!" said the Colonel, "I told you she was not aware of it," and on her imploring cry of inquiry, Ellen answered, "Of this folly of Robert."

"Bobus, do you mean," she cried. "Oh!" as conviction flashed on her, "I never thought of *that*."

"I am sure you did not," said the Colonel kindly.

"But—but," she said, bewildered, "if—if you mean Esther—why did you send her over last night, and let him go out to find her now."

"She is safe, reading to Mrs. Coffinkey," said Ellen. "I did not know Robert was at home, or I should not have let her come without me."

"Esther is a very dear, sweet-looking girl," said Caroline. "If only she were any one else's daughter! Though that does not sound civil! But I know my dear husband had the strongest feeling about first cousins marrying."

"Yes, I trusted to your knowing that," said the Colonel. "And I rely on you not to be weak nor to make the task harder to us. Remembering, too," he added in a voice of sorrow and pity that made the words sound not unkind, "that even without the relationship, we should feel that there were strong objections."

"I know! My poor Bobus!" said Caroline, sadly. "That makes it such a pity she is his cousin. Otherwise she might do him so much good."

"I have not much faith in good done in that manner," said the Colonel.

Caroline thought him mistaken, but could not argue an abstract question, and came to the personal one. "But how far has it gone? How do you know about it? I see now that I might have detected it in his tone, but one never knows, when one's children grow up."

"The Colonel was obliged to tell him in the autumn that we did not approve of flirtations between cousins," said Mrs. Brownlow.

"And he answered——?"

"That flirtation was the last thing he intended," said the Colonel. "On which I told him that I would have no nonsense."

"Was that all?"

"Except that at Christmas he sent her, by way of card, a drawing that must have cost a large sum," said the Colonel. "We thought it better to let the

child keep it without remark, for fear of putting things into her head ; though I wrote and told him such expensive trumpery was folly that I was much tempted to forbid. So what does he do on Valentine's Day but send her a complete set of ornaments like little birds, in Genoa silver—exquisite things. Well, she was very good, dear child. We told her it was not nice or maidenly to take such valuable presents ; and she was quite contented and happy when her mother gave her a ring of her own, and we have written to Jessie to send her some pretty things from India."

"She said she did not care for anything that Ellie did not have too," added her mother.

"Then you returned them ?"

"Yes, and my young gentleman patronisingly replies that he 'appreciates my reluctance, and reserves them for a future time.'"

"Just like Bobus !" said Caroline. "He never gives up his purpose ! But how about dear little Esther ? Is she really untouched ?"

"I hope so," replied her mother. "So far it has all been put upon propriety, and so on. I told her, now she was grown up and come home from school she must not run after her cousins as she used to do, and I have called her away sometimes when he has tried to get her alone. Last evening, she told me in a very simple way—like the child she is—that Robert would walk home with her in the moonlight, and

hindered her when she tried to join the others, telling me she hoped I should not be angry with her. He seems to have talked to her about this London plan; but I told her on the spot it was impossible."

"I am afraid it is!" sighed Caroline. "Dear Essie! I will do my best to keep her peace from being ruffled, for I know you are quite right; but I can't help being sorry for my boy, and he is so determined that I don't think he will give up easily."

"You may let him understand that nothing will ever make me consent," returned the Colonel.

"I will, if he enters on it with me," said Caroline; "but I think it is advisable as long as possible to prevent it from taking a definite shape."

Caroline was much better able now to hold her own with her brother and sister-in-law. Not only did her position and the obligations they were under give her weight, but her character had consolidated itself in these years, and she had much more force, and appearance of good sense. Besides, John was a weight in the family now, and his feeling for his aunt was not without effect. They talked of his prospects and of Jessie's marriage, over their early tea. The elders of the walking party came in with hands full of flowers, namely, the two Johns and Eleanor, but ominously enough, Bobus was not there. He had been lost sight of soon after they had met.

Yes, and at that moment he was loitering at a safe distance from the door of the now invalid and half-

blind Mrs. Coffinkey, to whom the Brownlow girls read by turns. She lived conveniently up a lane not much frequented. This was the colloquy which ensued when the tall, well-proportioned maiden, with her fresh, modest, happy face, tripped down the steps:—

“So the Coffinkey is unlocked at last! Stern Proserpine relented!”

“Robert! You here?”

“You never used to call me Robert.”

“Mamma says it is time to leave off the other.”

“Perhaps she would like you to call me Mr. Robert Otway Brownlow.”

“Don’t talk of mamma in that way.”

“I would do anything my queen tells me except command my tones when there is an attempt to stiffen her. She is not to be made into buckram.”

“Please, Robert,” as some one met and looked at them, “let me walk on by myself.”

“What? Shall I be the means of getting you into trouble?”

“No, but I ought not——”

“The road is clear now, never mind. In town there are no gossips, that’s one comfort. Mother Carey is propounding the plan now.”

“Oh, but we shall not go. Mamma told me so last night.”

“That was before Mother Carey had talked her over.”

“Do you think she will?”

"I am certain of it ! You are a sort of child of Mother Carey's own, you know, and we can't do without you."

"Mother would miss us so, just as we are getting useful."

"Yes, but Ellie might stay."

"Oh ! we have never been parted. We *couldn't* be."

"Indeed ! Is there no one that could make up to you for Ellie ?"

"No, indeed !" indignantly.

"Ah, Essie, you are too much of a child yet to understand the force of the love that——"

"Don't," broke in Esther, "that is just like people in novels ; and mamma would not like it."

"But if I feel ten times far more for you than 'the people in novels' attempt to express ?"

"Don't," again cried Esther. "It is Sunday."

"And what of that, my most scriptural little queen ?"

"It isn't a time to talk out of novels," said Esther, quickening her pace, to reach the frequented road and throng of church-goers."

"I am not talking out of any novel that ever was written," said Bobus seriously ; but she was speeding on too fast to heed him, and started as he laid a hand on her arm.

"Stay, Essie ; you must not rush on like a frightened fawn, or people will stare," he said ; and she slackened

her pace, though she shook him off and went on through the numerous passengers on the footpath, with her pretty head held aloft with the stately grace of the startled pheasant, not choosing to seem to hear his attempts at addressing her, and taking refuge at last in the innermost recesses of the family seat at Church, though it was full a quarter to five.

There the rest of the party found her, and as they did not find Bobus, they concluded that all was safe. However, when the two Johns were walking home with Mother Carey, Bobus joined them, and soon made his mother fall behind with him, asking her, "I hope your eloquence prevailed."

"Far from it, Bobus," she said. "In fact you have alarmed them."

"H.S.H. doesn't improve with age," he replied carelessly. "She never troubled herself about Jessie."

"Perhaps no one gave her cause. My dear boy, I am very sorry for you," and she laid her hand within his arm.

"Have they been baiting you? Poor little Mother Carey!" he said. "Force of habit, you know, that's all. Never mind them."

"Bobus, my dear, I must speak, and in earnest. I am afraid you may be going on so as to make yourself and—some one else unhappy, and you ought to know that your father was quite as determined as your uncle against marriages between first cousins."

"My dear mother, it will be quite time to argue

that point when the matter becomes imminent. I am not asking to marry any one before I am called to the bar, and it is very hard if we cannot, in the meantime, live as cousins."

"Yes, but there must be no attempt to be 'a little more than kin.'"

"Less than kind comes in on the other side!" said Bobus, in his throat. "I tell you the child *is* a child who has no soul apart from her sister, and there's no use in disturbing her till she has grown up to have a heart and a will of her own."

"Then you promise to let her alone?"

"I pledge myself to nothing," said Bobus, in an impracticable voice. "I only give warning that a commotion will do nobody any good."

She knew he had not abandoned his intention, and she also knew she had no power to make him abandon it, so that all she could say was, "As long as you make no move there will be no commotion, but I only repeat my assurance that neither your uncle nor I, acting in the person of your dear father, will ever consent."

"To which I might reply, that most people end by doing that against which they have most protested. However, I am not going to stir in the matter for some time to come, and I advise no one else to do so."

CHAPTER XXVII.

BLUEBEARD'S CLOSET.

A moment then the volume spread,
And one short spell therein he read.

Scott.

THE reality of John's intention to devote himself to medicine made Caroline anxious to look again at the terms of the trust on which she held the Magnum Bonum secret.

Moreover, she wanted some papers and accounts, and therefore on Monday morning, while getting up, she glanced towards the place where her davenport usually stood, and to her great surprise missed it. She asked Emma, who was dressing her, whether it had been moved, and found that her maid had been as much surprised as herself at its absence, and that the housekeeper had denied all knowledge of it.

"Other things is missing, ma'am," said Emma; "there's the key of the closet where your dresses hangs. I've hunted high and low for it, and nobody hasn't seen it."

"Keys are easily lost," said Caroline, "but my

davenport is very important. Perhaps in some cleaning it has been moved into one of the other rooms and forgotten there. I wish you would look. You know I had it before I came here."

Not only did Emma look, but as soon as her mistress was ready to leave the room she went herself on a voyage of discovery, peeping first into the little dressing-room, where seeing Babie at her morning prayers, she said nothing to disturb her, and then going on to look into some spare rooms beyond, where she thought it might have been disposed of, as being not smart enough for my lady's chamber. Coming back to her room she found, to her extreme amazement, the closet open, and Babie pushing the davenport out of it, with her cheeks crimson and a look of consternation at being detected.

"My dear child! The davenport there! Did you know it? How did it get there?"

"I put it," said Barbara, evidently only forced to reply by sheer sincerity.

"You! And why?"

"I thought it safer," mumbled Babie.

"And you knew where the key of the closet was?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In my doll's bed, locked up in the baby-house."

"This is most extraordinary. When did you do this?"

"Just before we came out to you at Leukerbad,"

said Babie, each reply pumped out with great difficulty.

"Four years ago! It is a very odd thing. I suppose you had a panic, for you were too old then for playing monkey tricks."

To which Babie made no answer, and the next minute her mother, who had become intent on the davenport, exclaimed, "I suppose you haven't got the key of this in your doll's bed?"

"Don't you remember, mother," said Barbara, "you sent it home to Janet, and it was lost in her bag on the crossing?"

"Oh, yes, I remember! And it is a Bramah lock, more's the pity. We must have the locksmith over from Kenminster to open it."

The man was sent for, the davenport was opened, desk, drawers, and all. Caroline was once more in possession of her papers. She turned them over in haste, and saw no book of *Magnum Bonum*. Again, more carefully she looked. The white slate, where those precious last words had been written, was there, proving to her that her memory had not deceived her, but that she had really kept her treasure in that davenport.

Then, in her distress, she thought of Barbara's strange behaviour, went in quest of her, and calling her aside, asked her to tell her the real reason why she had thought fit to secure the davenport in the closet.

"Why," asked Babie, her eyes growing large and shining, "is anything missing?"

"Tell me first," said Caroline, trembling.

Then Babie told how she had wakened and seen Janet with the desk part raised up, reading something, and how, when she lay watching and wondering, Janet had shut it up and gone away. - "And I did not feel comfortable about it, mother," said Babie, "so I thought I would lock up the davenport, so that nobody could get at it."

"You did not see her take anything away?"

"No, I can't at all tell," said Babie. "Is anything gone?"

"A book I valued very much. Some memoranda of your father were in that desk, and I cannot find them now. You cannot tell, I suppose, whether she was reading letters or a book?"

"It was not letters," said Babie, "but I could not see whether it was print or manuscript. Mother, I think she must have taken it to read and could not put it back again because I had hidden the davenport. Oh! I wish I hadn't, but I couldn't ask any one, it seemed such a wicked, dreadful fancy that she could meddle with your papers."

"You acted to the best of your judgment, my dear," said Caroline. "I ought never to have let it out of my own keeping."

"Do you think it was lost in the bag, mother?"

"I hope not. That would be worst of all!" said

Caroline. "I must ask Janet. Don't say anything about it, my dear. Let me think it over."

When Caroline recollected Janet's attempt, as related by Robert, to break open her bureau, she had very little doubt that the book was there. It could not have been lost in the bag, for, as she remembered, reference had been made to it when Janet had extorted permission to go to Zurich, and she had warned her that even these studies would not be a qualification for the possession of the secret. Janet had then smiled triumphantly, and said she would make her change her mind yet; had looked, in fact, very much as Bobus did when he put aside her remonstrances. It was not the air of a person who had lost the records of the secret and was afraid to confess, though it was possible she might have them in her own keeping. Caroline longed to search the bureau, but however dishonourably Janet might have acted towards herself, she could not break into her private receptacles without warning. So after some consideration, she made Barbara drive her to the station, and send the following telegraphic message to Janet's address at Edinburgh:—

"Come home at once. Father's memorandum book missing. Must be searched for."

All that day and the next the sons wondered what was amiss with their mother, she was so pensive, with starts of flightiness. Allen thought she was going to have an illness, and Bobus that it was a very strange

and foolish way of taking his resistance, but all the time Armine was going about quite unperceiving, in a blissful state. The vicar's sister, a spirited, active, and very winning woman of thirty-five, had captivated him, as she did all the lads of the parish. He had been walking about with her, being introduced to all the needs of the parish, and his enthusiastic nature throwing itself into the cause of religion and beneficence, which was in truth his congenial element ; he was ready to undertake for himself and his mother whatever was wanted, without a word of solicitation, nay rather, the vicar, who thought it all far too good to be true, held him back.

And when he came in and poured out his narrative, he was, for the first time in his life, even petulant that his mother was too much preoccupied to confirm his promises, and angry when Allen laughed at his vehemence, and said he should beware of model parishes.

By dinner-time the next day Janet had actually arrived. She looked thin and sharp, her keen black eyes roamed about uneasily, and some indescribable change had passed over her. Her brothers told her study had not agreed with her, and she did not, as of old, answer tartly, but gave a stiff, mechanical smile, and all the evening talked in a woman-of-the-world manner, cleverly, agreeably, not putting out her prickles, but like a stranger, and as if on her guard.

Of course there was no speaking to her till bed-

time, and Caroline at first felt as if she ought to let one night pass in peace under the home roof; but she soon felt that to sleep would be impossible to herself, and she thought it would be equally so to her daughter without coming to an understanding. She yearned for some interchange of tenderness from that first-born child from whom she had been so long separated, and watched and listened for a step approaching her door; till at last, when the maid was gone and no one came, she yielded to her impulse; and in her white dressing-gown, with softly-slippered feet, she glided along the passage with a strange mixed feeling of maternal gladness that Janet was at home again, and of painful impatience to have the interview over.

She knocked at the door. 'There was no answer. She opened it. There was no one there, but the light on the terrace below, thrown from the windows of the lower room, was proof to her that Janet was in her sitting-room, and she began to descend the private stairs that led down to it. She was as light in figure and in step as ever, and her soft slippers made no noise as she went down. The door in the wainscot was open, and from the foot of the stairs she had a strange view. Janet's candle was on the chair behind her, in front of it lay half-a-dozen different keys, and she herself was kneeling before the bureau, trying one of the keys into the lock. It would not fit, and in turning to try another, she first saw the white figure,

and started violently at the first moment, then, as the trembling, pleading voice said, "Janet," she started to her feet, and cried out angrily—

"Am I to be always spied and dogged?"

"Hush, Janet," said her mother, in a voice of grave reproof, "I simply came to speak to you about the distressing loss of what your father put in my charge."

"And why should I know anything about it?" demanded Janet.

"You were the last person who had access to the davenport," said her mother.

"This is that child Barbara's foolish nonsense," muttered Janet to herself.

"Barbara has nothing to do with the fact that I sent you the key of the davenport where the book was. It is now missing. Janet, it is bitterly painful to me to say so, but your endeavours to open that bureau privately have brought suspicion upon you, and I must have it opened in my presence."

"I have a full right to my own bureau."

"Of course you have; but I had these notes left in my trust. It is my duty towards your father to use every means for their recovery."

"You call it a duty to my father to shut up his discovery and keep it useless for the sake of a lot of boys who will never turn it to profit."

"Of that I am judge. My present duty is to recover it. Your conduct is such as to excite suspicion, and I therefore cannot allow you to take any-

thing out of that bureau except in my presence, till I have satisfied myself that his memoranda are not there. I would not search your drawers in your absence, and therefore telegraphed for you."

"Thank you. Since you like to treat your daughter like a maidservant, you may go on and search my boxes," said Janet, sulkily.

"I beg your pardon, my poor child, if I am unjustly causing you this humiliation," said Caroline humbly, as Janet sullenly flumped down into a chair without answering. She took up the keys that Janet had brought with her, and tried them one by one, where Janet had been using them. The fourth turned in the lock, and the drawer was open!

"I will disarrange nothing unnecessarily," said Caroline. "Look for yourself."

Janet would not, however, move hand, foot, or eye, while her mother put in her hand and took out what lay on the top. It was the *Magnum Bonum*. She held it to the light and was sure of it; but she had taken up an envelope at the same time, and her eye fell on the address as she was laying it down. It was to—"James Barnes, Esq." And as her eye caught the pencilled words "My Will," a strange electric thrill went through her, as she exclaimed, "What is this, Janet? How came it here?"

"Oh! take it if you like," said Janet. "I put it there to spare you worry; but if you *will* pursue your researches, you must take the consequences."

Caroline, thus defied, still instinctively holding Magnum Bonum close to her, drew out the contents of the envelope, and caught in the broken handwriting of the old man, the words—"Will and Testament—George Gould — Wakefield — Elvira de Menella — whole estate." Then she saw signature, seal, witnesses—date, "April 24th, 1862."

"What is this? Where did it come from?" she asked.

"I found it—in his table drawer; I saw it was not valid, so I kept it out of the way from consideration for you," said Janet.

"How do you know it was not valid?"

"Oh—why—I didn't look much, or know much about it either," said Janet, in an alarmed voice. "I was a mere child then, you know. I saw it was only scrawled on letter-paper, and I thought it was only a rough draft, which would just make you uncomfortable."

"I hope you did, Janet. I hope you did not know what you were doing!"

"You don't mean that it has been executed?"

"Here are witnesses," said Caroline—her eyes swam too much to see their names. "It must be for better heads than ours to decide whether this is of force; but, oh, Janet! if we have been robbing the orphan all these years!"

"The orphan has been quite as well off as if it had been all hers," said Janet. "Mother, just listen!"

Give me the keeping of my father's secret, and—even if we lose this place—it shall make up for all——”

“You do not know what you are talking of, Janet,” said Caroline, pushing back those ripples of white hair that crowned her brow, “nor indeed I either! I only know you have spoken more kindly to me, and that you are under my own roof again. Kiss me, my child, and forgive me if I have pained you. You did not know what you did about the will, and as to this book, I *know* you meant to put it back again.”

“I did—I did, mother—if Barbara had not hidden the desk,” cried Janet. And as her mother kissed her, she laid her head on her shoulder, and wept and sobbed in an hysterical manner, such as Caroline had never seen in her before. Of course she was tired out by the long journey, and the subsequent agitation; and Caroline soothed and caressed her, with the sole effect of making her cry more piteously; but she would not hear of her mother staying to undress and put her to bed, gathered herself up again as soon as she could, and when another kiss had been exchanged at her bedroom door, Caroline heard it locked after her.

Very little did Caroline sleep that night. If she lost consciousness at all, it was only to know that something strange and wonderful was hanging over her. Sometimes she had a sense that her trust and mission as a rich woman had been ill-fulfilled, and therefore the opportunity was to be taken away; but more often there was a strange sense of relief from

what she was unfit for. She remembered that strange dream of her children turning into statues of gold, and the Magnum Bonum disenchanting them, and a fancy came over her that this might yet be realised, a fancy to whose lulling effect she was indebted for the sleep she enjoyed in the morning, which made her unusually late, but prevented her from looking as haggard as Janet did, with eyelids swollen, as if she had cried a good deal longer last night.

The postbag was lying on the table, and directly after family prayers (which she had for some years begun when at home), Mrs. Brownlow beguiled her nervousness by opening it, and distributing the letters.

The first she opened was such a startling one, that her head seemed to reel, and she doubted whether the shock of last night was confusing her senses.

“MY DEAR MRS. BROWNLOW,—What will you think of us now that the full truth has burst on you? Of me especially, to whom you entrusted your dear daughter. I never could have thought that Nita would have lent herself to the transaction, and alas! I let the two girls take care of themselves more than was right. However, I can at least give you the comfort of knowing that it was a perfectly legal marriage, for Nita was one of the witnesses, and looked to all that——”

Here Caroline could read no more. Sick and stunned, she began to dispense her teacups, and even

helped herself to some of the food that was handed round, but her hand trembled so, and she looked so white and bewildered, that Allen exclaimed—

“Mother, you are really ill. You should not have come down.”

She could not bear the crowd and buzz of voices and all the anxious eyes any longer. She pushed back her chair, and as sons came hurrying round with offered arms, she took the nearest, which was Jock's, let him take her to the morning-room, and there assured him she was not ill, only she had had a letter. She wanted nothing, only that he should go back, and send her Janet. She tried once more to master the contents of Miss Ray's letter, but she was too dizzy; and when Janet came in, she could only hold it out to her.

“Oh!” said Janet, “poor old Maria has forestalled me. Yes, mother, it is what I meant to tell you, only I thought you could not bear a fresh shock last night.”

“Married! Oh, Janet; why thus?”

“Because we wished to avoid the gossip and conventionality. My uncle and aunt were to be avoided.”

“Let me hear at once who it is,” said Caroline, with the sharpness of misery.

“It is Professor Demetrius Hermann, a most able lecturer, whose course we have been following. I met him a year ago, at the *table d'hôte*, at Zurich,

where he delivered a series of lectures on physiology on a new and original system. He is now going on with them in Scotland, where his wonderful acuteness and originality have produced an immense sensation, and I have no doubt that in his hands this discovery of my father's will receive its full development."

There was no apology in her tone ; it was rather that of one who was defying censure ; and her mother could only gasp out—

"How long?"

"Three weeks. When we heard you were returning, we thought it would save much trouble and difficulty to secure ourselves against contingencies, and profit by Scottish facilities." Wherewith Janet handed her mother a certificate of her marriage, at Glasgow, before Jane Ray and another witness, and taking her wedding-ring from her purse, put it on, adding, "When you see him, mother, you will be more than satisfied."

"Where is he?" interrupted Caroline.

"At the Railway Hotel, waiting till you are prepared to see him. He brought me down, but he is to give a lecture at Glasgow the day after tomorrow, so we can only remain one night."

"Oh, Janet—Janet, this is very fearful!"

At that moment, Johnny strolled up to the window from the outside, and, as he greeted Janet with some surprise, he observed—

"There's a most extraordinary looking foreign

fellow loitering about out here. I warned him he was on private ground, and he made me a bow, as if I, not he, were the trespasser."

On this Janet darted out at the window without another word, and John exclaiming, in dismay—

"Mother Carey! what is the matter?"

She gasped out, "Oh, Johnny! she's married to him! And the children don't know it. Send them in—Allen and Bobus I mean—make haste; I must prepare them. Take that letter, and let the others know."

John saw the truest kindness was implicit obedience; and Allen and Bobus instantly joined her, the latter asking what new tomfoolery Janet had brought home, Allen following with a cup of coffee.

Caroline's lips felt too dry to speak, and she held out the certificate.

It was received by Allen, with the exclamation—

"By Jove!"

And by Bobus, with an odd, harsh laugh—

"I thought she would do something monstrous one of these days."

"Did you ever hear of him, Bobus?" she found voice to say, after swallowing a mouthful of coffee.

"I fancy I have. Yes, I remember now; he was lecturing and vapouring about at Zurich; he is half Greek, I believe, and all charlatan. Well, Janet *has* been and gone and done for herself now, and no mistake."

"But he is a professor," pleaded Caroline. "He must be of some university."

"Don't make too sure," said Allen, "A professor may mean a writing master. Good heavens! what a connection."

"It can't be so bad as that," said Caroline. "Remember, your sister is not foolish."

"Flatter an ugly woman," said Bobus, "and it's a regular case of fox and crow."

"Mercy! here they come!" cried Allen.

"Mother, do you go away! This is not work for you. Leave us to settle the rascal," said Bobus.

"No, Bobus," she said; "this ought to be settled by me. Remember that, whatever the man may be, he is Janet's husband, and she is your sister."

"Worse luck!" sighed Allen.

"And," she added, "he has to go away to-morrow, at latest," a sentence which she knew would serve to pacify Allen.

They had crossed the parterre by this time, and were almost at the window.

It was Bobus who took the initiative, bowing formally as he spoke, in German—

"Good morning, Herr Professor. You seem to have a turn for entering houses by irregular methods."

The new-comer bowed with suavity, saying, in excellent English—

"It is to your sister that in both senses I owe my

entrance, and to the lady, your mother, that I owe my apology."

And before Caroline well knew what was going on, he had one knee to the ground, and was kissing her hand.

"The tableau is incomplete, Janet," said Bobus, whom Caroline heartily wished away. "You ought to be on your knees beside him."

"I have settled it with my mother already," said Janet.

Both Caroline and her eldest son were relieved by the first glance at the man. He was small, and had much more of the Greek than of the German in his aspect, with neat little features, keen dark eyes, and no vulgarity in tone or appearance. His hands were delicate; there was nothing of the "greasy foreigner" about him, but rather an air of *finesse*, especially in his exquisitely trimmed little moustache and pointed beard, and his voice and language were persuasive and fluent. It might have been worse, was the prominent feeling, as she hastily said—

"Stand up, Mr. Hermann; I am not used to be spoken to in that manner."

"Nor is it an ordinary occasion on which I address madame," said her new son-in-law, rising. "I am aware that I have transgressed many codes, but my anxiety to secure my treasure must plead for me; and she assured me that she might trust to the goodness of the best of mothers."

“There is such a thing as abusing such goodness,” said Bobus.

“Sir,” said Hermann, “I understand that you have rights as eldest son, but I await my sentence from the lips of madame herself.”

“No, he is not the eldest,” interrupted Janet. “This is Allen—Allen, you were always good-natured. Cannot you say one friendly word?”

Something in the more childish, eager tone of Janet’s address softened Allen, and he answered—

“It is for mother to decide on what terms we are to stand, Janet, and strange as all this has been, I have no desire to be at enmity.”

Caroline had by this time been able to recover herself and spoke.

“Mr. Hermann can hardly expect a welcome in the family into which he has entered so unexpectedly, and—and without any knowledge of his antecedents. But what is done cannot be undone; I don’t want to be harsh and unforgiving. I should like to understand all about everything, and of course to be friends; as to the rest, it must depend on how they go on, and a great deal besides.”

It was a lame and impotent conclusion, but it seemed to satisfy the gentleman, who clasped her hand and kissed it with fervour, wrung that of Allen, which was readily yielded, and would have done the same by that of Bobus, if that youth had done more than accord very stiff cold tips.

Immediately after, John said at the door—

“Aunt Caroline, my father is here. Will you see him?”

That was something to be got over at once, and she went to the Colonel, who was very kind and pitiful to her, and spared her the “I told you so.” He did not even reproach her with being too lenient, in not having turned the pair at once out of her house; indeed, he was wise enough to think the extremity of a quarrel ought to be avoided, but he undertook to make every inquiry into Mr. Demetrius Hermann’s history, and observed that she should be very cautious in pledging herself as to what she would do for him, since she had, as he expressed it, the whip-hand of him, since Janet was totally dependent upon her.

“Oh! but Robert, I forgot; I don’t know if there is anything for anybody,” she said, putting her hand to her forehead; “there’s that other will! Ah! I see you think I don’t know what I am saying, and my head is getting past understanding much, but I really did find the other will last night.”

“What other will?”

“The one we always knew there must be, in favour of Elvira. This dreadful business put it out of my head; the children don’t know it yet, and I don’t seem able to think or care.”

It was true; severe nervous headache had brought her to the state in which she could do

nothing but lie passively on her bed. The Colonel saw this, and bade her think of nothing for the present, and sent Barbara to take care of her.

She spent the rest of the day in the sort of *anéantissement* which that sort of headache often produces, and in the meantime everybody held *têtes-à-têtes*. The Colonel held his peace about the will, not half crediting such a catastrophe, and thinking one matter at a time quite enough for his brain ; but he talked to the Professor, to Janet, to Allen, and to Bobus, and tried to come to a knowledge of the bridegroom's history, and to decide what course ought to be pursued, feeling as the good man always did and always would do, that he was, or ought to be, the supreme authority for his brother's widow and children.

Allen was quite placable, and ready to condone everything. He thought the Athenian Professor a very superior man, with excellent classical taste, by which it was plain that his mosaic pavement, his old china, and his pictures had met with rare appreciation. Moreover, the Professor knew how to converse, and could be brilliantly entertaining ; there was nothing to find fault with in his appearance ; and if Janet was satisfied, Allen was. He knew his uncle hated foreigners, but for his own part, he thought nothing so dull as English respectability.

For once the Colonel declared that Bobus had more sense ! Bobus had come to a tolerably clear comprehension of the matter, and his first impressions were

confirmed by subsequent inquiries. Demetrius Hermann was the son of some lawyer of King Otho's court who had married a Greek lady. He had studied partly at Athens, partly at so many other universities, that Bobus thought it rather suspicious ; while his uncle, who held that a respectable degree *must* be either of Oxford or Cambridge, thought this fatal to his reputation. He had studied medicine at one time, but had broached some theory which the German faculty were too narrow to appreciate ; "Which means," quoth Bobus, "either that he could not get a licence to practise, or else had it revoked."

Then he had taken to lecturing. The professorship was obscure ; he said it was Athenian, and Bobus had no immediate means of finding out whether it were so or not, nor of analysing the alphabet of letters that followed his name upon the advertisement of his lectures.

Apparently he was a clever lecturer, fluent and full of illustration, with an air of original theory that caught people's attention. He knew his ground, and where critically scientific men were near to bring him to book, was cautious to keep within the required bounds, but in the freer and less regulated places, he discoursed on new theories and strange systems connected with the mysteries of magnetism, and producing extraordinary and unexplained effects.

Robert and Jock were inclined to ascribe to some of these arts the captivation of so clever a person as their

sister, by one whom they both viewed with repulsion as a mere adventurer.

They had not the clue which their mother had to the history of the matter, when the next day, though still far from well, she had an interview with her daughter and the Athenian Professor before their return to Scotland.

He knew of the Magnum Bonum matter. It seemed that Janet, as her knowledge increased, had become more sensible of the difficulties in the pursuit, and being much attracted by his graces and ability, had so put questions for her own enlightenment as to reveal to him that she possessed a secret. To cajole it from her, so far as she knew it, had been no greater difficulty than it was to the fox to get the cheese from the crow ; and while to him she was the errant unprotected young lady of large and tempting fortune, he could easily make himself appear to her the missing link in the pursuit. He could do what as a woman she could not accomplish, and what her brothers were not attempting.

In that conviction, nay, even expecting her mother to be satisfied with his charms and his qualifications, she claimed that he might at least read the MS. of the book, assuring her mother that all she had intended the night before was to copy out the essentials for him.

“To take the spirit and leave me the letter ?” said Caroline. “O Janet, would not that have been worse than carrying off the book ?”

“Well, mother, I maintain that I have a right to

it," said Janet, "and that there is no justice in withholding it."

"Do you or your husband fulfil these conditions, Janet?" and Caroline read from the white slate those words about the one to whom the pursuit was intrusted being a sound, religious man, who would not seek it for his own advancement but for the good of others.

Janet exultantly said that was just what Demetrius would do. As to the being a sound religious man, her mother might seek in vain for a man of real ability who held those old-fashioned notions. They were very well in her father's time, but what would Bobus say to them?

She evidently thought Demetrius would triumph in his private interview with her mother, but if Caroline had had any doubt before, that would have removed it. Janet honestly had a certain enthusiasm for science, beneficence, and the honour of the family, but the Professor besieged Mrs. Brownlow with his entreaties and promises just as if—she said to herself—she had been the widow of some quack doctor for whose secret he was bidding.

If she would only grant it to him and continue her allowance to Janet while he was pursuing it, then there would be no limit to the share he would give her when the returns came in. It was exceedingly hard to answer without absolutely insulting him, but she entrenched herself in the declaration that her husband's conditions required a full diploma and degree, and

that till all her sons were grown up she had been forbidden to dispose of it otherwise. Very thankful she was that Armine was not seventeen, when a whole portfolio of testimonials in all sorts of languages were unfolded before her ! Whatever she had ever said of Ellen's insular prejudices, she felt that she herself might deserve, for she viewed them all as utterly worthless compared with an honest English or Scottish degree. At any rate, she could not judge of their value, and they did not fulfil her conditions. She made him understand at last that she was absolutely impracticable, and that the only distant hope she would allow to be wrung from her by his coaxing, wheedling tones, soft as the honey of Hybla, was, that if none of her sons or nephews were in the way of fulfilling the conditions, and he could bring her satisfactory English certificates, she might consider the matter, but she made no promises.

Then he most politely represented the need of a maintenance while he was thus qualifying himself. Janet had evidently not told him about the will, and Caroline only said that from a recent discovery she thought her own tenure of the property very insecure, and she could undertake nothing for the future. She would let him know. However, she gave him a cheque for 100*l.* for the present, knowing that she could make it up from the money of her own which she had been accumulating for Elvira's portion.

Then Janet came in to take leave. Mr. Hermann

described what the excellent and gracious lady had granted to him, and he made it sound so well, and his wife seemed so confident and triumphant, that her mother feared she had allowed more to be inferred than she intended, and tried to explain that all depended on the fulfilment of the conditions of which Janet at least was perfectly aware. She was overwhelmed, however, with his gratitude and Janet's assurances, and they went away, leaving her with a hand much kissed by him, and the fondest, most lingering embrace she had ever had from Janet. Then she was free to lie still, abandoned to fears for her daughter's future and repentance for her own careless past, and, above all crushed by the ache that would let her really feel little but pain and oppression.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TURN OF THE WHEEL.

Is there, for honest poverty,
That hangs his head and a' that,
The coward slave, we pass him by,
A man's a man for a' that,

Burns.

THINKING and acting were alike impossible to Caroline for the remainder of the day when her daughter left her, but night brought power of reflection, as she began to look forward to the new day, and its burthen.

Her headache was better, but she let Barbara again go down to breakfast without her, feeling that she could not face her sons at once, and that she needed another study of the document before she could trust herself with the communication. She felt herself too in need of time to pray for right judgment and steadfast purpose, and that the change might so work with her sons that it might be a blessing, not a curse. Could it be for nothing that the finding of Magnum Bonum had wrought the undoing of this wrong? That thought, and the impulse of self-bracing, made her breakfast well on the dainty little meal sent up

to her by the Infanta, and look so much refreshed, that the damsel exclaimed—

“You are much better, mother! You will be able to see Jock before he goes——”

“Fetch them all, Babie; I have something to tell you——”

“Writs issued for a domestic parliament,” said Allen, presently entering. “To vote for the grant to the Princess Royal on her marriage? Do it handsomely, I say, the Athenian is better than might be expected, and will become prosperity better than adversity.”

“Being capable of taking others in besides Janet,” said the opposition in the person of Bobus. “He seemed so well satisfied with the Gracious Lady house-mother that I am afraid she has been making him too many promises.”

“That was impossible. It was not about Janet that I sent for you, boys. It was to think what we are to do ourselves. You know I always thought there must be another will. Look there!”

She laid it on the table, and the young men stood gazing as if it were a venomous reptile which each hesitated to touch.

“Is it legal, Bobus?” she presently asked.

“It looks—rather so——” he said in an odd, stunned voice.

“Elvira, by all that’s lucky!” exclaimed Jock. “Well done, Allen, you are still the Lady Clare!”

"Not till she is of age," said Allen, rather gloomily.

"Pity you didn't marry her at Algiers," said Jock.

"Where did this come from?" said Bobus, who had been examining it intently.

"Out of the old bureau."

"Mother!" cried out Barbara, in a tone of horror, which perhaps was a revelation to Bobus, for he exclaimed—

"You don't mean that Janet had had it, and brought it out to threaten you?"

"Oh, no, no! it was not so dreadful. She found it long ago, but did not think it valid, and only kept it out of sight because she thought it would make me unhappy."

"It is a pity she did not go a step further," observed Bobus. "Why did she produce it now?"

"I found it. Boys, you must know the whole truth, and consider how best to screen your sister. Remember she was very young, and fancied a thing on a common sheet of paper, and shut up in an unfastened table drawer could not be of force, and that she was doing no harm." Then she told of her loss and recovery of what she called some medical memoranda of their father, which she knew Janet wanted, concluding—"It will surely be enough to say I found it in his old bureau."

"That will hardly go down with Wakefield," said Bobus; "but as I see he stands here as trustee for

that wretched child, as well as being yours, there is no fear but that he will be conformable. Shall I take it up and show it to him at once, so that if by any happy chance this should turn out waste paper, no one may get on the scent?"

"Your uncle! I was so mazed and stupefied yesterday that I don't know whether I told him, and if I did, I don't think he believed me."

"Here he comes," said Barbara, as the wheels of his dog-cart were heard below the window.

"Ask him to come up. It will be a terrible blow to him. This place has been as much to him as to any of us, if not more."

"Mother, how brave you are!" cried Jock.

"I have known it longer than you have, my dear. Besides, the mere loss is nothing compared with that which led to it. The worst of it is the overthrow of all your prospects, my dear fellow."

"Oh," said Jock, brightly, "it only means that we have something and somebody to work for now;" and he threw his arms round her waist and kissed her.

"Oh! my dear, dear boy, don't! Don't upset me, or your uncle will think it is about this."

"And don't, for Heaven's sake, talk as if it were all up with us," cried Bobus.

By this time the Colonel's ponderous tread was near, and Caroline met him with an apology for giving him the trouble of the ascent, but said that she had wanted to see him in private.

"Is this in private?" asked the Colonel, looking at the five young people.

"Yes. They have a right to know all. Here it is, Robert."

He sat down, deliberately put on his spectacles, took the will, read it once, and groaned, read it twice, and groaned more deeply, and then said—

"My poor dear sister! This is a bad business! a severe reverse! a very severe reverse!"

"He has hit on his catch-word," thought Caroline, and Jock's arm still round her gave a little pressure, as if the thought had occurred to him. The moment of amusement gave a cheerfulness to her voice as she said—

"We have been doing sad injustice all this time; that is the worst of it. For the rest, we shall be no worse off than we were before."

"It will be in Allen's power to make up to you a good deal. That is a fortunate arrangement, but I am afraid it cannot take place till the girl is of age."

"You are all in such haste," said Bobus. "It would take a good deal to make me accept such an informal scrap as this. No doubt one could drive a coach and horses through it."

"That would not lessen the injustice," said his mother.

"Could there not be a compromise?" said Allen.

"That is nonsense," said his uncle. "Either *this* will stand, or *that*, and I am afraid this is the later.

April 18th. Was that the time of that absurd practical joke of yours?"

"Too true," said Allen. "You recollect the old brute said I should remember it."

"Witnesses—? There's Gomez, the servant who was drowned on his way out after his dismissal—Elizabeth Brook—is it—servant.—Who is to find her out?"

"Richards may know."

"It is not our business to hunt up the witnesses. That's the look-out of the other party," said Bobus impatiently.

"You don't suppose I mean to contest it?" said his mother. "It is bad enough to go on as we have been doing these eight years. I only want to know what is right and truth, and if this be a real will."

"Where did it come from?" asked the Colonel, coming to the critical question. "Did you say you found it yourself, Caroline?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the old bureau."

"What! the one that stood in his study? You don't say so! I saw Wakefield turn the whole thing out, and look for any secret drawer before I would take any steps; I could have sworn that not the thickness of that sheet of paper escaped us. I should like, if only out of curiosity, to see where it was."

"Just as I said, mother," said Bobus; "there's no

use in trying to blink it to any one who knows the circumstances."

"You do not insinuate that there was any foul play!" said his uncle hotly.

"I don't know what else it can be called," said Caroline, faintly; "but please, Robert, and all the rest, don't expose her. Poor Janet found the thing in the back of the bedside table-drawer, fancied it a mere rough draft, and childlike, put it out of sight in the bureau, where I lighted on it in looking for something else. Surely there is no need to mention her?"

"Not if you do not contest the will," replied the Colonel, who looked thunderstruck; "but if you did, it must all come out to exonerate us, the executors, from shameful carelessness. Well, we shall see what Wakefield says! A severe reverse! a very severe reverse!"

When he found that Bobus meant to go in search of the lawyer that afternoon, he decided on accompanying him. And with a truly amazing burst of intuition, he even suggested carrying off Elvira to spend the day with Essie and Ellie, and even that an invitation might arise to stay all night, or as long as the first suspense lasted. Then muttering to himself, "A severe reverse—a most severe reverse!" he took his leave. Caroline went down stairs with him, as thinking she could the most naturally administer the invitation to Elvira, and the two eldest sons proceeded

to make arrangements for the time of meeting and the journey.

"A severe reverse!" said Jock, finding himself alone with the younger ones. "When one has a bitter draught, it is at least a consolation to have labelled it right."

"Shall we be very poor, Jock?" asked Barbara.

"I don't know what we were called before," he said; "but from what I remember, I fancy we had about what I have been using for my private delectation. Just enough for my mother and you to be jolly upon."

"That's all you think of!" said Armine.

"All that a man need think of," said Jock; "as long as mother and Babie are comfortable, we can do for ourselves very well."

"Ourselves!" said Armine, bitterly. "And how about this wretched place that we have neglected shamefully all these years!"

"Armine!" cried Jock, indignantly. "Why, you are talking of mother!"

"Mother says so herself."

"You went on raging about it; and, just like her, she did not defend herself. I am sure she has given away loads of money."

"But see what is wanting! The curate, and the school chapel, and the cottages; and if the school is not enlarged, they will have a school board. And what am I to say to Miss Parsons? I promised to

bring mother's answer about the curate this afternoon at latest."

"If she has the sense of a wren, she must know that a cataclysm like Janet's may account for a few trifling omissions."

"That's true," said Babie! "She can't expect it. Do you know, I am rather sorry we are not poorer? I hoped we should have to live in a very small way, and that I should have to work like you—for mother."

"Not like us, for pity's sake, Infanta!" cried Jock. "We have had enough of that. The great use of you is to look after mother; and keep her from galloping the life out of herself, and this chap from worrying it out of her."

"Jock!" cried Armine, indignantly.

"Yes, you will, if you go on moaning about these fads, and making her blame herself for them. I don't say we have all done the right thing with this money, I'm sure I have not, and most likely it serves us right to lose it, but to have mother teased about what, after all, was chiefly owing to her absence, is more than I will stand. The one duty in hand is to make the best of it for her. I shall run down again as soon as I hear how this is likely to turn out—for Sunday, perhaps. Keep up a good heart, Babie Bunting, and whatever you do, don't let him worry mother. Good-bye, Armie! What's the use of being good, if you can't hold up against a thing like this?"

"Jock doesn't know," said Armine, as the door closed. "Fads indeed!"

"Jock didn't mean that," pleaded Babie. "You know he did not ; dear, good Jock, he could not!"

"Jock is a good fellow, but he lives a frivolous, self-indulgent life, and has got infected with the spirit and the language," said Armine, "or he would understand that myself or my own loss is the very last thing I am troubled about. No, indeed, I should never think of that! It is the ruin of these poor people and all I meant to have done for them. It is very strange that we should only be allowed to waken to a sense of our opportunities to have them taken away from us!"

No one would have expected Armine, always regarded as the most religious of the family, to be the most dismayed, and neither he nor Barbara could detect how much of the spoilt child lay at the bottom of his regrets ; but his little sister's sympathy enabled him to keep from troubling his mother with his lamentations.

Indeed Allen was usually in presence, and nobody ever ventured on what might bore Allen. He was in good spirits, believing that the discovery would put an end to all trifling on Elvira's part, and that he and she would thus together be able to act the beneficent genii of the whole family. Even their mother had a sense of relief. She was very quiet, and moved about softly, like one severely shaken and bruised ;

but there was a calm in knowing the worst, instead of living in continual vague suspicion.

The Colonel returned with tidings that Mr. Wakefield had no doubt of the validity of the will, though it might be possible to contest it if Elizabeth Brook, the witness, could not be found ; but that would involve an investigation as to the manner of the loss, and the discovery. It was, in truth, only a matter of time ; and on Monday Mr. Wakefield would come down and begin to take steps. That was the day on which the family were to have gone to London, but Caroline's heart failed her, and she was much relieved when a kind letter arrived from Mrs. Evelyn, who was sure she could not wish to go into society immediately after Janet's affair, and offered to receive Elvira for as long as might be convenient, and herself—as indeed had been already arranged—to present her at court with Sydney. It was a great comfort to place her in such hands during the present crisis, all the more that Ellen was not at all delighted with her company for Essie and Ellie. She rushed home on Saturday evening to secure Delrio, and superintend her packing up, with her head a great deal too full of court dresses and ball dresses, fancy costumes, and Parisian hats, to detect any of the tokens of a coming revolution, even in her own favour.

Jock too came home that same evening, as gay and merry apparently as ever, and after dinner, claimed his mother for a turn in the garden.

"Has Drake written to you, mother?" he asked. "I met him the other day at Mrs. Lucas's, and it seems his soul is expanding. He wants to give up the old house—you know the lease is nearly out—and to hang out in a more fashionable quarter."

"Dear old house!"

"Now, mother, here's my notion. Why should not we hide our diminished heads there? You could keep house while the Monk and I go through the lectures and hospitals, and King's College might not be too far off for Armine."

"You, Jock, my dear."

"You see, it is a raving impossibility for me to stay where I am."

"I am afraid so ; but you might exchange into the line."

"There would be no great good in that. I should have stuck to the Guards because there I am, and I have no opinion of fellows changing about for nothing—and because of Evelyn and some capital fellows besides. But I found out long ago that it had been a stupid thing to go in for. When one has mastered the routine, it is awfully monotonous ; and one has nothing to do with one's time or one's brains. I have felt many a time that I could keep straight better if I had something tougher to do."

"Tell me, just to satisfy my mind, my dear, you have no debts."

"I don't owe forty pounds in the world, mother ;

and I shall not owe that, when I can get my tailor to send in his bill. You have given me as jolly an allowance as any man in the corps, and I've always paid my way. I've got no end of things about my rooms, and my horses and cab, but they will turn into money. You see, having done the thing first figure, I should hate to begin in the cheap and nasty style, and I had much rather come home to you, Mother Carey. I'm not too old, you know—not one-and-twenty till August. I shall not come primed like the Monk, but I'll try to grind up to him, if you'll let me, mother."

"Oh, Jock, dear Jock!" she cried, "you little know the strength and life it gives me to have you taking it so like a young hero."

"I tell you I'm sick of drill and parade," said Jock, "and heartily glad of an excuse to turn to something where one can stretch one's wits without being thought a disgrace to humanity. Now, don't you think we might be very jolly together?"

"Oh, to think of being there again! And we can have the dear old furniture and make it like home. It is the first definite notion any one has had. My dear, you have given me something to look forward to. You can't guess what good you have done me! It is just as if you had shown me light at the end of the thicket; ay, and made yourself the good stout staff to lead me through!"

"Mother, that's the best thing that ever was said

to me yet; worth ever so much more than all old Barnes's money-bags."

"If the others will approve! But any way it is a nest egg for my own selfish pleasure to carry me through. Why, Jock, to have your name on the old door would be bringing back the golden age!"

Nobody but Jock knew what made this such a cheerful Sunday with his mother. She was even heard making fun, and declaring that no one knew what a relief it would be not to have to take drives when all the roads were beset with traction engines. She had so far helped Armine out of the difficulties his lavish assurances had brought him into, that she had written a note to the Vicar, Mr. Parsons, telling him that she should be better able to reply in a little while; but Armine, knowing that he must not speak, and afraid of betraying the cause of his unhappiness and of the delay, was afraid to stir out of reach of the others lest Miss Parsons should begin an inquiry.

The Vicar of Woodside was, in fact, as some people mischievously called her, the Reverend Petronella Parsons. Whether she wrote her brother's sermons was a disputed question. She certainly did other things in his name which she had better have let alone. He was three or four years her junior, and had always so entirely followed her lead, that he seemed to have no personal identity; but to be only her male complement. That Armine should have set up a lady of this calibre for the first goddess of his fancy was

one of the comical chances of life, but she was a fine, handsome, fresh-looking woman of five-and-thirty with a strong vein of sentiment—ecclesiastical and poetic—just ignorant enough to gush freely, and too genuine to be *always* offensive. She had been infinitely struck with Armine, had hung a perfect romance of renovation on him, sympathised with his every word, and lavished on him what perhaps was not quite flattery, because she was entirely in earnest, but which was therefore all the worse for him.

Barbara had a natural repulsion from her, and could not understand Armine's being attracted, and for the first time in their lives this was creating a little difference between the brother and sister. Babie had said, in rather an uncalled-for way, that Miss Parsons would draw back when she knew the truth, and Armine had been deeply offended at such an ungenerous hint, and had reduced her to a tearful declaration that she was very sorry she had said anything so uncalled for.

Petronella herself had been much vexed at Armine's three days' defection, which was ascribed to the worldly and anti-ecclesiastical influences of the rest of the family. She wanted her brother to preach a sermon about Lot's wife ; but Jemmie, as she called him, had on certain occasions a passive force of his own, and she could not prevail. She regretted it the less when Armine and Babie duly did the work they had undertaken in the Sunday-school, though they would not come in for any intermediate meals.

"What did Mrs. Brownlow tell you in her note?" she asked of her brother while giving him his tea before the last service.

"That in a few days she shall be able to answer me."

"Ah, well! Do you know there is a belief in the parish that something has happened—that a claim is to be set up to the whole property, and that the whole family will be reduced to beggary?"

"I never heard of an estate to which there was not some claimant in obscurity."

"But this comes from undoubted authority." Mr. Parsons smiled a little. "One can't help it if servants *will* hear things. Well! any way it will be overruled for good to that dear boy—though it would be a cruel stroke on the parish."

It was the twilight of a late spring evening when the congregation streamed out of Church, and Elvira, who had managed hitherto to avoid all intercourse with the River Hollow party, found herself grappled by Lisette without hope of rescue. "My dear, this is a pleasure at last; I have so much to say to you. Can't you give us a day?"

"I am going to town to-morrow," said Elvira, never gracious to any Gould.

"To morrow! I heard the family had put off their migration."

"I go with Lucas. I am to stay with Mrs. Evelyn, Lord Fordham's mother, you know, who is to present me at the Drawing-room," said Elvira, magnificently.

"Oh! if I could only see you in your court dress it would be memorable," cried Mrs. Gould. "A little longer, my dear, our paths lie together."

"I must get home. My packing——"

"And may I ask what you wear, my dear? Is your dress ordered?"

"O yes, I had it made at Paris. It is white satin, with lilies—a kind of lily one gets in Algiers." And she expatiated on the fashion till Mrs. Gould said—

"Well, my love, I hope you will enjoy yourself at the Honourable Mrs. Evelyn's. What is the address, in case I should have occasion to write?"

"I shall have no time for doing commissions."

"That was not my meaning," was the gentle answer ; "only if there be anything you ought to be informed of——"

"They would write to me from home. Why, what do you mean?" asked the girl, her attention gained at last.

"Did it never strike you why you are sent up alone?"

"Only that Mrs. Brownlow is so cut up about Janet."

"Ah! youth is so sweetly unconscious. It is well that there are those who are bound to watch for your interests, my dear."

"I can't think what you mean."

"I will not disturb your happy innocence, my love. It is enough for your uncle and me to be awake, to

counteract any machinations. Ah! I see your astonishment! You are so simple, my dear child, and you have been studiously kept in the dark."

"I can't think what you are driving at," said Elvira, impatiently. "Mrs. Brownlow would never let any harm happen to me, nor Allen either. Do let me go."

"One moment, my darling. I must love you through all, and you will know your true friends one day. Are you—let me ask the question out of my deep, almost maternal, solicitude—are you engaged to Mr. Brownlow?"

"Of course I am!"

"Of course, as you say. Most ingenuous! Ah? well, may it not be too late!"

"Don't be so horrid, Lisette! Allen is not half a bad fellow, and frightfully in love with me."

"Exactly, my dear unsuspecting dove. There! I see you are impatient. You will know the truth soon enough. One kiss, for your mother's sake."

But Elvira broke from her, and rejoined Allen.

"I have sounded the child," said Lisette to her husband that evening, "and she is quite in the dark, though the very servants in the house are better informed."

"Better informed than the fact, may be," said Mr. Gould (for a man always scouts a woman's gossip).

"No, indeed. Poor dear child, she is blinded pur-

posely. She never guessed why she was sent to Kencroft while the old Colonel was called in, and they all agreed that the will should be kept back till the wedding with Mr. Allen should be over, and he could make up the rest. So now the child is to be sent to town, and surrounded with Mrs. Brownlow's creatures to prey upon her innocence. But you have no care for your own niece—none !”

CHAPTER XXIX.

FRIENDS AND UNFRIENDS.

Ay, and, I think,
One business doth command us all ; for mine
Is money.

Timon of Athens.

BEFORE the door of one of the supremely respectable and aristocratic but somewhat gloomy-looking houses in Cavendish Square, whose mauve plate-glass windows and link-extinguishers are like fossils of a past era of civilisation, three riding horses were being walked up and down, two with side-saddles and one for a gentleman. They were taken aside as a four-wheel drove up, while a female voice exclaimed—

“ Ah ! we are just it time ! ”

Cards and a note were sent in with a request to see Miss Menella.

Word came back that Miss Menella was just going out riding ; but on the return of a message that the visitors came from Mrs. Brownlow on important business, they were taken up-stairs to an ante-room.

They were three—Mr. Wakefield and Mr. Gould, and, to the great discontentment of the former, Mrs.

Gould likewise. Fain would he have shaken her off ; but as she truly said, who could deprive her of her rights as kinswoman, and wife to the young lady's guardian ?

After they had waited a few moments in the somewhat dingy surroundings of a house seldom used by its proper owners, Elvira entered in plumed hat and habit, a slender and exquisite little figure, but with a haughty twitch in her slim waist, superb indifference in the air of her little head, and a grasp of her coral-handled whip as if it were a defensive weapon, when Lisette flew up to offer an embrace with—

“Joy, joy, my dear child ! Remember, I was the first to give you a hint.”

“Good morning,” said Elvira, with a little bend of her head, presenting to each the shapely tip of a gauntleted hand, but ignoring her uncle and aunt as far as was possible. “Is there anything that need detain me, Mr. Wakefield ? I am just going out with Miss Evelyn and Lord Fordham, and I cannot keep them waiting.”

“Ah ! it is you that will have to be waited for now, my sweet one,” began Mrs. Gould.

“Here is a note from Mrs. Brownlow,” said Mr. Wakefield, holding it to Elvira, who looked like anything but a sweet one. “I imagine it is to prepare you for the important disclosure I have to make.”

A hot colour mounted in the fair cheek. Elvira tore open the letter and read—

"MY DEAR CHILD,—I can only ask your pardon for the unconscious wrong which I have so long been doing to you, and which shall be repaired as soon as the processes of the law render it possible for us to change places.

"Your ever loving,
"MOTHER CAREY."

"What does it all mean?" cried the bewildered girl.

"It means," said the lawyer, "that Mrs. Brownlow has discovered a will of the late Mr. Barnes more recent than that under which she inherited, naming you, Miss Elvira Menella, as the sole inheritrix."

"My dear child, let me be the first to congratulate you on your recovery of your rights," said Mrs. Gould, again proffering an embrace, but again the whip was interposed, while Elvira, with her eyes fixed on Mr. Wakefield, asked "What?" so that he had to repeat the explanation.

"Then does it all belong to me?" she asked.

"Eventually it will, Miss Menella. You are sole heiress to your great uncle, though you cannot enter into possession till certain needful forms of law are gone through. Mrs. Brownlow offers no obstruction, but they cannot be rapid."

"All mine!" repeated Elvira, with childish exultation. "What fun! I must go and tell Sydney Evelyn."

"A few minutes more, Miss Menella," said Mr.

Wakefield. "You ought to hear the terms of the will."

And he read it to her.

"I thought you told me it was to be mine. This is all you and uncle George."

"As your trustees."

"Oh, to manage as the Colonel does. You will give me all the money I ask you for. I want some pearls, and I must have that duck of a little Arab. Uncle George, how soon can I have it?"

"We must go through the Probate Court," he began, but his wife interrupted—

"Ways and means will be forthcoming, my dear," though for my part I think it would be much better taste in Mrs. Brownlow to put you in possession at once."

"Mr. Wakefield explained, my dear," said her husband, "that, much as Mrs. Brownlow wishes to do so, she cannot ; she has no power. It is her trustees."

"Oh yes, I know every excuse will be found for retaining the property as long as possible," said the lady.

"Then I shall have to wait ever so long," said the young lady. "And I do so want the Arab. It is a real love, and Allen would say so."

"I have another letter for you," said Mr. Wakefield, on hearing that name. "We will leave it with you. If you wish for further information, I would call immediately on receiving a line at my office."

Just then a message was brought from Mrs. Evelyn

inviting Miss Menella's friends to stay to luncheon. It incited Elvira, who knew neither awe nor manners, to run across the great drawing-room, leaving the doors open behind her, to the little morning-room, where sat Mrs. Evelyn, with Sydney, in her habit, standing by the mantelpiece.

"Oh, Mrs. Evelyn," Elvira began, "it is Mr. Wakefield and my uncle and his wife. They have come to say it is all mine; Uncle Barnes left it all to me."

"So I hear from Mrs. Brownlow," said Mrs. Evelyn gravely.

"Oh, Elfie, I am so sorry for you. Don't you hate it?" cried Sydney.

"Oh, but it is such fun! I can do everything I please," said the heiress.

"Yes, that's the best part," said Sydney. "I do envy you the day when you give it all back to Allen."

That reminded Elvira to open the note, and as she read it her great eyes grew round.

"SWEETEST AND DEAREST,—How I have always loved, and always shall love you, you know full well. But these altered circumstances bring about what you have so often playfully wished. Say the word and you are free, no longer bound to me by anything that has passed between us, though the very fibres of my heart and life are as much as ever entwined about you. Honour bids my dissolution of our engagement, and I

await your answer, though nothing can ever make me other than

“Your wholly devoted,
“ALLEN.”

Mrs. Evelyn had been prepared by a letter from her friend for what was now taking place ; Mr. Wakefield had likewise known the main purport of Allen's note, and had allowed that Mr. Brownlow could not as a gentleman do otherwise than release the young lady ; though he fully believed that it would be only as a matter of form, and that Elvira would not hear of breaking off. He had in fact spent much eloquence in persuading Mrs. Brownlow to continue to take the charge of the heiress during the three years before her majority. Begun in generous affection by Allen long ago, the engagement seemed to the lawyer, as well as to others, an almost providential means of at least partial restitution.

He had meant Elvira to read her letter alone, but she had opened it before the two ladies, and her first exclamation was a startled, incredulous—

“Ha ! What's this ? He says our engagement is dissolved.”

“He is of course bound to set you free, my dear,” said Mrs. Evelyn, “but it only depends on yourself.”

“Oh ! and I shall tease him well first,” cried Elvira, her face lighting up with fun and mischief. “He was so tiresome and did bother so ! Now I shall have my

swing! Oh, what fun! I won't let him worry me again just yet, I can tell him!"

"You don't seem to consider," began Sydney,—but Mrs. Gould took this moment for advancing.

From the whole length of the large drawing-room the trio had been spectators, not quite auditors, though perhaps enough to perceive what line the Evelyns were taking.

So Mrs. Gould advanced into the drawing-room; Mrs. Evelyn came forward to assume the duties of hostess; and Sydney turned and ran away so precipitately that she shut the door on the trailing skirt of her habit and had to open it again to release herself.

Mr. Wakefield hoped the young ladies would pardon him for having spoilt their ride, and Elvira was going off to change her dress, when, to his dismay, Mrs. Evelyn desired her to take her aunt to her room to prepare for luncheon. He had seen enough of Mrs. Gould to know that this was a most unlucky measure of courtesy on good simple Mrs. Evelyn's part, but of course he could do nothing to prevent it, and had to remain with Mr. Gould, both speaking in the strongest manner of Mrs. Brownlow's uprightness and bravery in meeting this sudden change. Mr. Wakefield said he hoped to prevail on her to retain the charge of the young lady for the present, and Mr. Gould assented that she could not be in better hands. Then Mrs. Evelyn (by way of doing anything for her friend)

undertook to make Elvira welcome as long as it might be convenient, and was warmly thanked. She further ascertained that the missing witness had been traced ; and that the most probable course of action would be that there would be an amicable suit in the Probate Court and then another of ejectment. Until these were over, things would remain in their present state, for how many weeks or months would depend upon the Law Courts, since Mrs. Brownlow's trustees would be legally holders of the property until the decision was given against them, and Miss Menella would be as entirely dependent on her bounty as she had been all these years. Meanwhile, as Mrs. Brownlow had no inclination to come to London and exhibit herself as a disinherited heroine, Mr. Wakefield and the Colonel strongly advised her remaining on at Belforest.

All this, Mrs. Evelyn had been anxious to understand, and thus was more glad of the delay of Elvira and her aunt up-stairs than she would have been, if she could ever have guessed what work a designing, flattering tongue could make with a vain, frivolous, selfish brain, with the same essential strain of vulgarity and worldliness.

Still, Elvira was chiefly shallow and selfish, and all her affection and confidence naturally belonged to her home of the last eight years. She was bewildered, perhaps a little intoxicated at the sense of riches, but was really quite ready to lean as much as ever upon her natural friends and protectors.

However, Lisette's congratulations and exultation rang pleasantly upon her ear, and she listened and talked freely, asking questions and rejoicing.

Now Mrs. Gould, to do her justice, measured others by herself, and really and truly believed that only accident had disconcerted a plan for concealing the will till Elvira should have been safely married to Allen Brownlow, and that thus it was the fixed purpose of the family to keep her and her fortune in their hands, a purpose which every instinct bade Mrs. Lisette Gould to traverse and overthrow, if only because she hated such artfulness and meanness. Unfortunately, too, as she had been a governess, and her father had been a Union doctor, she could put herself forward as something above a farmer's wife, indeed "quite as good as Mrs. Brownlow

All Mrs. Evelyn's civility had not redeemed her from the imputation of being "high," and Elvira was quite ready to call hers a very dull house. In truth, there was only moderate gaiety, and no fastness. The ruling interests were religious and political questions, as befitted Fordham's maiden session, the society was quietly high-bred, and intelligent, and there was much attention to health; for, strong as Sydney was, her mother would have dreaded the full whirl of the season as much for her body as for her mind.

At all this the frivolous, idle little soul chafed and fretted, aware that the circle was not a fashionable

one, eager for far more diversion and less restraint, and longing to join the party in Hyde Corner, where she could always make Allen do what she pleased.

With the obtuseness of an unobservant, self-occupied mind, she was taken by surprise when Mrs. Gould said that Mrs. Brownlow was not coming to town, adding, "It would be very unbecoming in her, though of course she will hold on at Belforest as long as there is any quibble of the law."

"Oh, I don't want to lose the season; she promised me!"

Then Mrs. Gould made a great stroke.

"My dear, you could not return to her. Not when the young man has just broken with you. You would have more proper pride."

"Poor Allen!" said Elvira. "If he would only let me alone, to have my fun like other girls."

"You see he could not afford to let you gratify your youthful spirits. Too much was at stake, and it is most providential that things had gone no further, and that your own good sense has preserved you to adorn a much higher sphere."

"Allen could be made something," said Elvira, "I know, for he told me he could get himself made a baronet. He always does as I tell him. Will they be very poor, Lisette?"

"Oh no, my dear, generous child, Mrs. Brownlow was quite as well provided for as she had any

right to expect. You need have no anxieties on that score."

To Elvira, the change from River Hollow to the Pagoda had been from rustic to gentle life, and thus this reply sounded plausible enough to silence a not much awakened compassion, but she still said, "Why can't I go home? I've nowhere else to go. I could not stay at the Farm," she added in her usual uncomplimentary style.

"No, my dear, I should not think of it. An establishment must be formed, but in the meantime, it would be quite beneath you to return to Mrs. Brownlow, again to become the prey of underground machinations. Besides, how awkward it would be while the lawsuits are going on. Impossible! No my dear, you must only return to Belforest in a triumphal procession. Surely there must be a competition for my lovely child among more congenial friends."

"Well," said Elvira, "there were the Folliots. We met them at Nice, and Lady Flora did ask me the other day, but Mrs. Brownlow does not like them, and Allen says they are not good form."

"Ah! I knew you could not want for friends. You are not bound by those who want to keep you to themselves for reasons of their own."

Thus before Elvira brought her aunt down stairs, enough had been done to make her eager to be with one who would discuss her future splendour rather

than deplore the change to her benefactor, and thus she readily accepted a proposal she would naturally have scouted, to go out driving with Mrs. Gould. She came back in a mood of exulting folly, and being far too shallow and loquacious to conceal anything, she related in full all Mrs. Gould's insinuations, which, to do her justice, the poor child did not really understand. But Sydney did, and was furious at the ingratitude which could seem almost flattered. Mrs. Evelyn found the two girls in a state of hot reproach and recrimination, and cut the matter short by treating them as if they were little children, and ordering them both off to their rooms to dress for dinner.

Elvira went away sobbing, and saying that nobody cared for her; everybody was wrapped up in the Brownlows, who had been enjoying what was hers ever so long.

And Sydney presently burst into her mother's room to pour out her disgust and indignation against the heartless, ungrateful, intolerable——

"Only foolish, my dear, and left all day in the hands of a flattering, designing woman."

"To let such things be said. Mamma, did you hear——?"

"I had rather not hear, Sydney; and I desire you will not repeat them to any one. Be careful, if you talk to Jock to-night. To repeat words spoken in her present mood might do exceeding mischief."

"She speaks as if she meant to cast them all off—Allen and all."

"Very possibly she may see things differently when she wakes to-morrow. But Sydney, while she is here, the whole subject must be avoided. It would not be acting fairly to use any influence in favour of our friends."

"Don't you mean to speak to her, mamma?"

"If she consults me, of course I shall tell her what I think of the matter, but I shall not force my advice on her, or give these Goulds occasion to say that I am playing into Mrs. Brownlow's hands."

They were going to an evening party, and Lucas and Cecil came to dinner to go with them. Cecil looked grave and gloomy, but Jock rattled away so merrily that Sydney began to wonder whether all this were a dream, or whether he were still unaware of the impending misfortune.

But Jock only waited for the friendly cover of a grand piece of instrumental music to ask Mrs. Evelyn if she had heard from his mother, and she was very glad to go into details with him, while he was infinitely relieved that the silence was over, and he could discuss the matter with his friends.

"Tell me truly, Jock, will she be comfortably off?"

"Very fairly. Yes, indeed. My father's savings were absolutely left to her, and have been accumulating all this time, and they will be a very fair maintenance for her and Babie."

"There is no danger of her having to pay the mesne profits?"

"No, certainly not, as it stands. Mr. Wakefield says that cannot happen. Then the old house in Bloomsbury, where we were all born, is our own, and she likes the notion of returning thither. Mrs. Evelyn, after all you and Sir James have done for me, what should you think of my giving it up, and taking to the pestle and mortar?"

"My dear Lucas!" Then after a moment's reflection, "I suppose it would be folly to think of going on as you are?"

"Raving insanity," said Jock, "and this notion really does seem to please my mother."

"Is it not just intolerable to hear him?" said Cecil, who had made his way to them.

"What is bred in the bone——" said Jock. "What's that? Chopin? Sydney, will you condescend to the apothecary's boy?"

As he led her to the dancing-room, she asked, "You can't really mean this, Jock. Cecil is breaking his heart about it."

"There are worse trades."

"But it is such a cruel pity!"

"What? The execution I shall make," he said lightly.

"For shame, Jock!"

But he went on teasing her, because their hearts were so very full. "'Tis just the choice between various means of slaughter"

"Don't!" she exclaimed. "Something can be done to prevent your throwing yourself away. Why can't you exchange?"

"It is too late to get into any corps where I should not be an expense to my mother," said Jock, regretting his decision a good deal more when he found how she regarded it.

"Well, sacrifice is something!" sighed Sydney.

Jock defied strange feelings by a laugh and the reply, "Equal to the finest thing in the 'Traveller's Joy,' and that was the knight who let the hyena eat up his hand that his lady might finish her rosary undisturbed."

"It is as bad—or as good—to let the hyena eat up your sword hand as to cut yourself off from all that is great and noble—all we used to think you would do."

So spoke Sydney Evelyn in her girlish prejudice, and the prospects that had recently seemed to Lucas so fair and kindly, suddenly clouded over and became dull, gloomy, and despicable. She felt as if she were saving him from becoming a deserter as she went on—

"I am sure Babie must be shocked!"

"I don't know whether Babie has heard. She has serious thoughts of coming out as a lady-help, editing the 'Traveller's Joy' as a popular magazine, giving lessons in Greek, or painting the crack picture in the Royal Academy. In fact, she would rather prefer to have the whole family on her hands."

"It is all the spirit of self-sacrifice," said Sydney ; "but oh, Lucas, let it be any sacrifice but that of your sword ! Think how we should all feel if there was a great glorious war, and you only a poor creature of a civilian, instead of getting—as I know you would—lots of medals and Victoria Crosses, and knighthood—real knighthood ! Oh, Jock, think of that ! When your mother thinks of that, she can't want you to make any such mistaken sacrifice to her. Live on a crust if you like, but don't—don't give up your sword."

"This is coming it strong," muttered Jock. "I did not think anyone cared so much."

"Of course I care."

The words were swept off as they whirled together into the dance, where the clasping hands and flying feet had in them a strange impulse, half tenderness, half exultation, as each felt an importance to the other unknown before. Childishness was not exactly left behind in it, but a different stage was reached. Sydney felt herself to have done a noble work, and gloried in watching till her hero should have achieved greatness on a crust a day, and Jock was equally touched and elated at the intimation that his doings were so much to her.

Friendship sang the same note. Cecil, honest lad, had never more than the average amount either of brains or industry, and despised medicines to the full as much as did his sister. Abhorring equally the

toil and the degradation, he deemed it a duty to prevent such a fall, and put his hope in his uncle. Nay, if his mother had not assured him that it was too late, he would have gone off at once to seek Sir James at his club.

Lord Fordham had been in bed long before the others returned, but in the morning a twisted note was handed to his mother, briefly saying he was running down to see how it was with them at Belforest.

When a station fly was seen drawing to the door, Allen, who was drearily leaning over the stone wall of the terrace, much disorganised by having received no answer to his letter, instantly jumped to the conclusion that Elvira had come home, sprang to the door, and when he only saw the tall figure emerge, he concluded that something dreadful had happened, grasped Fordham's hand, and demanded what it was.

It fell flat that she had last been seen full-dressed going off to a party.

"Then, if there's nothing, what brought you here? I mean," said poor Allen, catching up his courtesy, "I'm afraid there's nothing you or any one else can do."

"Can I see your mother?"

Allen turned him into the library and went off to find his mother, and instruct her to discover from "that stupid fellow" how Elvira was feeling it. When, after putting away the papers she was trying

to arrange, Caroline went downstairs, she had no sooner opened the door than Barbara flew up to her, crying out—

“Oh, mother, tell him not !”

“Tell him what, my dear ?” as the girl hung on her, and dragged her into the ante-room. “What is the matter ?”

“If it is nonsense, he ought not to have made it so like earnest,” said Babie, all crimson, but quite gravely.

“You don’t mean ——”

“Yes, mother.”

“How could he ?” cried Caroline, in her first annoyance at such things beginning with her Babie.

“You’ll tell him, mother. You’ll not let him do it again ?”

“Let me go, my child. I must speak to him and find out what it all means.”

Within the library she was met by Fordham.

“Have I done very wrong, Mrs. Brownlow ? I could not help it.”

“I wish you had not.”

“I always meant to wait till she was older, and I grew stronger, but when all this came, I thought if we all belonged to one another it might be a help ——”

“Very, very kind, but ——”

“I know I was sudden and frightened her,” he continued ; “but if she could ——”

"You forget how young she is."

"No, I don't. I would not take her from you. We could all go on together."

"All one family? Oh, you unpractised boy!"

"Have we not done so many winters? But I would wait, I meant to have waited, only I am afraid of dying without being able to provide for her. If she would have me, she would be left better off than my mother, and then it would be all right for you and Armie. What are you smiling at?"

"At your notions of rightness, my dear, kind Duke. I see how you mean it, but it will not do. Even if she had grown to care for you, it would not be right for me to give her to you for years to come."

"May not I hope till then?"

She could not tell how sorry she should be to see in her little daughter any dawnings of an affection which would be a virtual condemnation to such a life as his mother's had been.

"You don't guess how I love her! She has been the bright light of my life ever since the Engelberg,—the one hope I have lived for!"

"My poor Duke!"

"Then do you quite mean to deny me all hope?"

"Hope must be according to your own impressions, my dear Fordham. Of course, if you are well, and still wishing it four or five years hence, it would be free to you to try again. More, I cannot say. No, don't thank me, for I trust to your honour to make

no demonstrations in the meantime, and not to consider yourself as bound."

It was a relief that Armine here came in, attracted by a report of his friend's arrival, and Mrs. Brownlow went in search of her daughter, to whom she was guided by a sonata played with very unnecessary violence.

"You need not murder Haydn any more, you little barbarian," she said, with a hand on the child's shoulder, and looking anxiously into the gloomy face. "I have settled him."

Babie drew a long breath, and said—

"I'm glad ! It was so horrid ! You'll not let him do it any more ?"

"Then you decidedly would not like it ?" returned her mother.

"Like it ? Poor Duke ! Mother ! As if I could ever ! A man that can't sit in a draught, or get wet in his feet !" cried Babie, with the utmost scorn ; and reading reproof as well as amused pity in her mother's eyes, she added, "Of course, I am very sorry for him ; but fancy being very *sorry* for one's love !"

"I thought you liked wounded knights ?"

"Wounded ! Yes, but they've done something, and had glorious wounds. Now Duke—he is very good, and it is not his fault but his misfortune ; but he is such a—such a muff !"

"That's enough, my dear ; I am quite content that my Infanta should wait for her hero. Though," she

added, almost to herself, "she is too childish to know the true worth of what she condemns."

She felt this the more when Babie, who had coaxed the housekeeper into letting her begin a private school of cookery, started up, crying—

"I must go and see my orange biscuits taken out of the oven! I should like to send a taste to Sydney!"

Yes, Barbara was childish for nearly sixteen, and, as it struck her mother at the moment, rather wonderfully so considering her cleverness and romance. It was better for her that the softening should not come yet, but, mother as she was, Caroline's sympathies could not but be at the moment with the warm-hearted, impulsive, generous young man, moved out of all his habitual valetudinarian habits by his affection, rather than with the light-hearted child, who spurned the love she did not comprehend, and despised his ill-health. Had the young generation no hearts? Oh, no—no—it could not be so with her loving Barbara, and she ought to be thankful for the saving of pain and perplexity.

Poor Armine was not getting much comfort out of his friend, who was too much preoccupied to attend to what he was saying, and only mechanically assented at intervals to the proposition that it was an inscrutable dispensation that the will and the power should so seldom go together. He heard all Armine's fallen castles about chapels, schools, curates, and

sisters, as in a dream, really not knowing whether they were or were not to be. And with all his desire to be useful, he never perceived the one offer that would have been really valuable, namely, to carry off the boy out of sight of the scene of his disappointment.

Fordham was compelled to stay for an uncomfortable luncheon, when there were spasmodic jerks of talk about subjects of the day to keep up appearances before the servants, who flitted about in such an exasperating way that their mistress secretly rejoiced to think how soon she should be rid of the fine courier butler.

Just as the pony-carriage came round for Armine to drive his friend back to the station, the Colonel came in, and was an astonished spectator of the farewells.

"So that's your young lord," he said. "Poor lad! if our nobility is made of no tougher stuff, I would not give much for it. What brought him here?"

"Kindness—sympathy ——" said Caroline, a little awkwardly.

"Much of that he showed," said Allen, "just knowing nothing at all about anybody! No! If it were not so utterly ridiculous, I should think he had come to make an offer to Babie"; and as his sister flew out of the room, "You don't mean that he has, mother?"

"Pray, don't speak of it to any one!" said

Caroline. "I would not have it known for the world. It was a generous impulse, poor dear fellow ; and Babie has no feeling for him at all."

"Very lucky," said the uncle. "He looks as if his life was not worth a year's purchase. So you refused him ? Quite right too. You are a sensible woman, Caroline, in the midst of this severe reverse !"

CHAPTER XXX.

AS WEEL OFF AS AYE WAGGING.

Lesbia hath a beaming eye,
But no one knows for whom it beameth ;
Right and left its arrows fly,
But what they aim at, no one dreameth.

BY the advice, or rather by the express desire, of her trustees, Mrs. Brownlow remained at Belforest, while they accepted an offer of renting the London house for the season. Mr. Wakefield declared that there was no reason that she should contract her expenditure ; but she felt as if everything she spent beyond her original income, except of course the needful outlay on keeping up the house and gardens, were robbery of Elvira, and she therefore did not fill up the establishment of servants, nor of horses, using only for herself the little pair of ponies which had been turned out in the park.

No one had perhaps realised the amount of worry that this arrangement entailed. As Barbara said, if they could have gone away at once and worked for their living like sensible people in a book, it would have been all very well—but this half-and-half state

was dreadful. Personally it did not affect Babie much, but she was growing up to the part of general sympathiser, and for the first time in their lives there was a pull in contrary directions by her mother and Armine.

Every expenditure was weighed before it was granted. Did it belong rightly to Belforest estate or to Caroline Brownlow? And the claims of the church and parish at Woodside were doubtful. Armine, under the influence of Miss Parsons, took a wide view of the dues of the parish, thought there was a long arrear to be paid off, and that whatever could be given was so much out of the wolf's mouth.

His mother, with "Be just before you are generous" ringing in her ears, referred all to the Colonel, and he had long had a fixed scale of the duties of the property as a property, and was only rendered the more resolute in it by that vehemence of Armine's which enhanced his dislike and distrust of the family at the Vicarage.

"Bent on getting all they could while they could," he said, quite unjustly as to the Vicar, and hardly fairly by the sister, whose demands were far exceeded by those of her champion.

The claims of the cottages for repair, and of the school for sufficient enlargement and maintenance to obviate a School Board, were acknowledged ; but for the rest, the Colonel said, "his sister was perfectly at liberty. No one could blame her if she threw her

balance at the bank into the sea. She would never be called to account ; but since she asked him whether the estate was bound to assist in pulling the Church to pieces, and setting up a fresh curate to bring in more absurdities, he could only say what he thought !” &c.

These thoughts of his were of course most offensive to Armine, who set all down to sordid Puritan prejudice, could not think how his mother could listen, and, when Babie stood up for her mother, went off to blend his lamentations with those of Miss Parsons, whose resignation struck him as heroic. “Never mind, Armine, it will all come in time. Perhaps we are not fit for it yet. We cannot expect the world’s justice to understand the outpouring of the saints liberality.”

Armine repeated this interesting aphorism to Barbara, and was much disappointed that the shrewd little woman did not understand it, or only so far as to say, “But I did not know that it was saintly to be liberal with other people’s money.”

He said Babie had a prejudice against Miss Parsons ; and he was so far right that the Infanta did not like her, thought her a humbug, and sorely felt that for the first time something had come between herself and Armine.

Allen was another trouble. He did not agree to the retrenchments, in which he saw no sense, and retained his horse and groom. Luckily he had retained

only one when going abroad, and at this early season he needed no more. But his grievous anxiety and restlessness about Elvira did not make him by any means insensible to the effects of a reduced establishment in a large house, and especially to the handiwork of the good woman who had been left in charge, when compared with that of the 80% cooks who had been the plague of his mother's life.

No one, however, could wonder at his wretchedness, as day after day passed without hearing from Elvira, and all that was known was that she had left Mrs. Evelyn and gone to stay with Lady Flora Folliott, a flighty young matron, who had been enraptured with her beauty at a *table d'hôte* a year ago, and had made advances not much relished by the rest of the party.

No more was to be learnt till Lucas found a Saturday to come down. Before he could say three words he, was cross-examined. Had he seen Elvira?

"Several times."

"Spoken to her?"

"Yes."

"What had she said?"

"Asked him to look at a horse."

"Did she know he was coming home."

"Yes."

"Had she sent any message?"

"Well—yes. To desire that her Algerine costume should be sent up. Whew!" as Allen flung himself

out of the room. "How have I put my foot in it, mother?"

"You don't mean that that was all?"

"Every jot! What, has she not written? The abominable little elf! I'm coming." And he shrugged his shoulders as Allen, who had come round to the open window, beckoned to him.

He was absolutely grappled by a trembling hand, and a husky voice demanded, "What message did she really send? I can't stand foolery."

"Just that, Allen—to Emma. Really just that. You can't shake more out of me. You might as well expect anything from that Chinese lantern. Hold hard. 'Tis not I ——"

"Don't speak! You don't know her! I was a fool to think she would confide to a mere buffoon," cried poor Allen, in his misery. "Yet if they were intercepting her letters ——"

Wherewith he buried himself in the depths of the shrubbery, while Jock, with a long whistle, came back through the library window to his mother, observing—

"Intercepted! Poor fellow! Hardly necessary, if possible, though Lady Flora might wish to catch her for Clanmacnalty. Has the miserable imp really vouchsafed no notice of any of you?"

"Not the slightest; and it is breaking Allen's heart."

"As if a painted little marmoset were worth a man's heart! But Allen has always been infatuated

about her, and there's a good deal at stake, though if he could only see it in the right, light he is well quit of such a bubble of a creature. I wouldn't be saddled with it for all Belforest."

"Don't call her any more names, my dear! I only wish any one would represent to her the predicament she keeps Allen in. He can't press for an answer, of course; but it is cruel to keep him in this suspense. I wonder Mrs. Evelyn did not make her write."

"I don't suppose it entered her mind that the little wretch (I beg your pardon) had not done it of her own accord, and with those Folliotts there's no chance. They live in a perpetual whirl, enough to distract an Archbishop. Twenty-four parties a week at a moderate computation."

"Unlucky child!"

"Wakefield is heartily vexed at her having run into such hands," said Jock; "but there is no hindering it; no one has any 'power, and even if he had, George Gould is a mere tool in his wife's hands."

"Still Mr. Wakefield might insist on her answering Allen one way or the other. Poor fellow! I don't think it would cost her much, for she was too childish ever to be touched by that devotion of his. I always thought it a most dangerous experiment, and all I wish for now is that she would send him a proper dismissal, so that his mind might be settled. It would be bad enough, but better than going on in this way."

"I'll see him," said Jock, "or may be I can do the business myself, for, strange to say, the creature doesn't avoid me, but rather runs after me."

"You meet her in society?"

"Yes, I've not come to the end of my white kids yet, you see. And mother, I came to tell you of something that has turned up. You know the Evelyns are all dead against my selling out. I dined with Sir James on Tuesday, and found next day it was for the sake of walking me out before Sir Philip Cameron, the Cutteejung man, you know. He is sure to be sent out again in the autumn, and he has promised Sir James that if I can get exchanged into some corps out there, he will put me on his staff at once. Mother!"

He stopped short, astounded at the change of countenance, that for a moment she could neither control nor conceal, as she exclaimed "India!" but rallying at once she went on. "Sir Philip Cameron! My dear boy, that's a great compliment. How delighted your uncle will be!"

"But you, mother!"

"O yes, my dear, I shall, I will, like it. Of course I am glad and proud for my Jock! How very kind of Sir James!"

"Isn't it? He talked it over with me as if I had been Cecil, and said I was quite right not to stay in the Guards; and that in India, if a man has any brains at all and reasonable luck, he can't help getting

on. So I shall be quite and clean off your hands, and in the way of working forward, and perhaps of doing something worth hearing of. Mother, you will be pleased then?"

"Shall I not, my dear, dear Jockey! I don't think you could have a better chief. I have always heard that Sir Philip was such a good man."

"So Mrs. Evelyn said. She was sure you would be satisfied. You can't think how kind they were, making the affair quite their own," said Jock, with a little colour in his face. "They absolutely think it would be wrong to give up the service."

"Yes; Mrs. Evelyn wrote to me that you ought not to be thrown away. It was very kind and dear, but with a little of the aristocratic notion that the army is the only profession in the world. I can't help it; I can't think your father's profession unworthy of his son."

"She didn't say so!"

"No, but I understood it. Perhaps I am touchy; I don't think I am ungrateful. They have always made you like one of themselves."

"Yes, so much that I don't like to run counter to their wishes when they have taken such pains. Besides, there are things that can be thought of, even by a poor man, as a soldier, which can't in the other line."

This speech, made with bent head, rising colour, and hand playing with his mother's fan, gave her, all

unwittingly on his part, a keen sense that her Jock was indeed passing from her ; but she said nothing to damp his spirits, and threw herself heartily into his plans, announcing them to his uncle with genuine exultation. To this the Colonel fully responded, telling Jock that he would have given the world thirty years ago for such a chance, and commending him for thus getting off his mother's hands.

"I only wish the rest of you were doing the same," he said ; "but each one seems to think himself the first person to be thought of, and her the last."

The Colonel's wish seemed in course of fulfilment, for when Lucas went a few days later to his brother Robert's rooms, he found him collecting testimonials for his fitness to act as Vice-principal to a European college at Yokohama for the higher education of the Japanese.

"Mother has not heard of it," said Jock.

"She need not till it is settled," answered Bobus. "It will save her trouble with her clerical friends if she only knows too late for a protest."

Jock understood when he saw the stipulations against religious teaching, and recognised in the Principal's name an essayist whose negations of faith had made some stir. However, he only said, "It will be rather a blow."

"There are limits to all things," replied Bobus. "The truest kindness to her is to get afloat away

from the family raft as speedily as possible. She has quite enough to drag her down."

"I should hope to act the other way," said Jock.

"Get your own head above water first," said Bobus. "Here's some good advice gratis, though I've no expectation of your taking it. Don't go in for study in the old quarters! Go to Edinburgh or Paris or anywhere you please, but cut the connection, or you'll never be rid of loafers for life. Wherever mother is, all the rest will gravitate. Mark me, Allen is spoilt for anything but a walking gentleman, Armine will never be good for work, and how many years do you give Janet's Athenian to come to grief in? Then will they return to the domestic hearth with a band of small Grecians, while Dr. Lucas Brownlow is reduced to a *rotifer* or wheel animal, circulating in a trap collecting supplies, with '*sic vos non vobis*' for his motto."

Jock looked startled. "How if there be no such *rotifer*?" he said. "You don't really think there will be nothing to depend on when we are both gone?"

"When?"

"Yes, I've a chance of getting on Cameron's staff in India."

"Oh, that's all right, old fellow! Why, you'll be my next neighbour."

"But about mother? You don't seriously think

Ali and Armie will be nothing but dead weights on her ? ”

“ Only as long as there’s anybody to hold them up,” said Bobus, perceiving that his picture had taken an effect the reverse of what he intended. “ They have no lack of brains, and are quite able to shift for themselves and mother too, if only they have to do it, even if she were a pauper, which she isn’t.”

But it was with a less lightsome heart that Jock went to his quarters to prepare for a fancy ball, where he expected to meet Elvira, though whether he should approach her or not would depend on her own caprice.

It was a very splendid affair. A whole back garden had been transformed into a vast pavilion, containing an Armida’s garden, whose masses of ferns and piles of gorgeous flowers made delightful nooks for strangers who left the glare of the dancing-room, and the quaint dresses harmonised with the magic of the gaslight and the strange forms of the exotics.

The simple scarlet of the young Guardsman was undistinguished among the brilliant character-groups which represented old fairy tales and nursery rhymes. There were the “ White Cat and her Prince,” “ Puss-in-Boots and the Princess,” “ Little Snowflake and her Bear,” and, behold, here was the loveliest Fatima ever seen, in the well-known Algerine dress, mated with a richly robed and turbaned hero, whose beard was blue,

though in ordinary life red, inasmuch as he was Lady Flora's impecunious and not very reputable Scottish peer of a brother. That lady herself, in a pronounced bloomer, represented the little old woman of doubtful identity, and her husband the pedlar, whose "name it was Stout"; while not far off the Spanish lady, in garments gay, as rich as may be, wooed her big Englishman in a dress that rivalled Sir Nicolas Blount's.

There was a pretty character quadrille, and then a general *mêlée*, in which Jock danced successively with Cinderella and the fair equestrian of Banbury Cross, and lost sight of Fatima, till, just as he was considering of offering himself to little Bo-peep, he saw her looking a good deal bored by the Spanish lady's Englishman.

Tossing her head till the coins danced on her forehead, she exclaimed, "Oh, there's my cousin; I must speak to him!" and sprang to her old companion as if for protection. "Take me to a cool corner, Jock," she said, "I am suffocating."

"No wonder, after waltzing with a mountain."

"He can no more waltz than fly! And he thinks himself irresistible! He says his dress is from a portrait of his ancestor, Sir Somebody; and Flora declares his only ancestor must have been the Fat Boy! And he thought I was a Turkish Sultana! Wasn't it ridiculous? You know he never says anything but 'Exactly.'"

"Did he intone it so as to convey all this?"

"He is a little inspired by his ruff and diamonds. Flora says he wants to dazzle me, and will have them changed into paste before he makes them over to his young woman. He has just tin enough to want more, and she says I must be on my guard."

"You want no guard, I should think, but your engagement."

"What are you bringing that up for? I suppose you know how Allen wrote to me?" she pouted.

"I know that he thought it due to you to release you from your promise, and that he is waiting anxiously for your reply. Have you written?"

"Don't bore so, Jock," said Elvira, pettishly. "It was no doing of mine, and I don't see why I should be teased."

"Then you wish me to tell him that he is to take your silence as a release from you."

"I authorise nothing," she said. "I hate it all."

"Look here, Elvira," said Jock, "do you know your own mind? Nobody wants you to take Allen. In fact, I think he is much better quit of you; but it is due to him, and still more to yourself, to cancel the old affair before beginning a new one."

"Who told you I was beginning a new one?" asked she, pertly.

"No one can blame you, provided you let him loose first. It is considered respectable, you know, to be off with the old love before you are on with the new. Nay, it may be only a superstition."

"Superstition!" she repeated in an awed voice that gave him his cue, and he went on,—“Oh yes, a lady has been even known to come and shake hands with the other party after he had been hanged to give back her troth, lest he should haunt her.”

“Allen isn't hanged,” said Elvira, half frightened, half-cross. “Why doesn't he come himself?”

“Shall he?” said Jock.

“My dear child, I've been running madly up and down for you!” cried Lady Flora, suddenly descending on them, and carrying off her charge with a cursory nod to the Guardsman, marking the difference between a detrimental and even the third son of a millionaire.

He saw Elvira no more that night, and the next post carried a note to Belforest.

“May 31st.

“DEAR ALLEN,—I don't know whether you will thank me, but I tried to get a something definite out of your tricky Elf, and the chief result, so far as I can understand the elfish tongue, is, that she sought no change, and the final sentence was, ‘Why doesn't he come himself?’ I believe it is her honest wish to go on, when she is left to her proper senses; but that is seldom. You must take this for what it is worth from the buffoon,

“J. L. B.”

Allen came full of hope, and called the next morning.

Miss Menella was out riding. He got a card for a party where she was sure to be present, and watched the door, only to see her going away on the arm of Lord Clanmacnalty to some other entertainment. He went to Mr. Folliott's door, armed with a note, and heard that Lady Flora and Miss Menella were gone out of town for a few days. So it went on, and he turned upon Jock, with indignation at having been summoned to be thus deluded. The undignified position added venom to the smart of the disregarded affection and the suspense as to the future, and Jock had much to endure after every disappointment, though Allen clung to him rather than to any one else because of his impression that Elvira's real preference was unchanged (such as it was), and that these failures were rather due to her friends than to herself.

This became more clear through Mrs. Evelyn. Her family had connections in common with the Dowager Lady Clanmacnalty, and the two ladies met at the house of their relation. Listening in the way of duty to the old Scottish Countess's profuse communications, she heard what explained a good deal.

Did she know the Spanish girl who was with Flora—a handsome creature and a great heiress? Oh yes; she had presented her. Strange affair! Flora understood that there was a deep plot for appropriating the young lady and her fortune.

“She had been engaged to Mr. Brownlow long before her claims were known,” began Mrs. Evelyn.

"Oh, yes! It was very ingeniously arranged, only the discovery was made too soon. I have it on the best authority. When the girl came to stay with Flora, her aunt asked for an interview—such a nice sensible woman—so completely understanding her position. She said it was such a distress to her not to be qualified to take her niece into society, yet she could not take her home, living so near, to be harassed by this young man's pursuit."

"I saw Mrs. Gould myself," said Mrs. Evelyn. "I cannot say I was favourably impressed."

"Oh, we all know she is not a lady; never professes it, poor thing. She is quite aware that her niece must move in a different sphere, and all she wants is to have her guarded from that young Brownlow. He follows them everywhere. It is quite the business of Flora's life to avoid him."

"Perhaps you don't know that Mrs. Brownlow took that girl out of a farmhouse, and treated her like a daughter, merely because they were second or third cousins. The engagement to Allen Brownlow was made when the fortune was entirely on his side."

"Precaution or conscience, eh?" said the old lady, laughing. "By the bye, you were intimate with Mrs. Brownlow abroad. How fortunate for you that nothing took place while they had such expectations! Of no family, I hear; of quite low extraction. A parish doctor *he* was, wasn't he?"

"A distinguished surgeon."

“And *she* came out of some asylum or foundling hospital?”

“Only the home for officers’ daughters,” said Mrs. Evelyn, not able to help laughing. “Her father, Captain Allen, was in the same regiment with Colonel Brownlow, her husband’s brother. I assure you the Menellas and Goulds have no reason to boast.”

“A noble Spanish family,” said the dowager. “One can see it in every gesture of the child.”

It was plain that the old lady intended Mr. Barnes’s hoards to repair the ravages of dissipation on the never very productive estates of Clanmacnalty, and that while Elvira continued in Lady Flora’s custody, there was little chance of a meeting between her and Allen. The girl seemed to be submitting passively, and no doubt her new friends could employ tact and flattery enough to avoid exciting her perverseness. No doubt she had been harassed by Allen’s exaction of response to his ardent affection, and wearied of his monopoly of her. Maiden coyness and love of liberty might make her as willing to elude his approach as her friends could wish.

Once only, at a garden party, did he touch the tips of her fingers, but no more. She never met his eye, but threw herself into eager flirtation with the men he most disliked, while the lovely carnation was mounting in her cheek, and betraying unusual excitement. It became known that she was going early in July into the country with some gay people who were

going to give a series of fêtes on some public occasion, and then that she was to go with Lady Clanmacnalty and her unmarried daughter to Scotland, to help them entertain the grouse-shooting party.

Allen's stay in London was clearly of no further use, as Jock perceived with a sensation of relief, for all his pity could not hinder him from being bored with Allen's continual dejection, and his sighs over each unsuccessful pursuit. He was heartily tired of the part of confidant, which was the more severe, because, whenever Allen had a fit of shame at his own undignified position, he vented it in reproaches to Jock for having called him up to London; and yet as long as there was a chance of seeing Elvira, he could not tear himself away, was wild to get invitations to meet her, and lived at his club in the old style of expense.

Bobus was brief with Allen, and ironical on Jock's folly in having given the summons. For his own part he was much engrossed with his appointment, going backwards and forwards between Oxford and London, with little time for the concerns of any one else; but the evening after this unfortunate garden party, when Jock had accompanied his eldest brother back to his rooms, and was endeavouring, by the help of a pipe, to endure the reiteration of mournful vituperations of destiny in the shape of Lady Flora and Mrs. Gould, the door suddenly opened, and Bobus stood before them with his peculiarly brisk,

self-satisfied air, in itself an aggravation to any one out of spirits.

"All right," he said, "I didn't expect to find you in, but I thought I would leave a note for the chance. I've heard of the very identical thing to suit you, Ali, my boy."

"Indeed," said Allen, not prepared with gratitude for his younger brother's patronage.

"I met Bulstrode at Balliol last night, and he asked if I knew of any one (a perfect gentleman he must be, that matters more than scholarship) who would take a tutorship in a Hungarian Count's family. Two little boys, who live like princes, tutor the same, salary anything you like to ask. It is somewhere in the mountains, a feudal castle, with capital sport."

"Wolves and bears," cried Jock, starting up with his old boyish animation. "If I wasn't going pig-sticking in India, what wouldn't I give for such a chance. The tutor will teach the young ideas how to shoot, of course."

"Of course," said Bobus. "The Count is a diplomat, and there's not a bad chance of making oneself useful, and getting on in that line. I should have jumped at it, if I hadn't got the Japs on my hands."

"Yes, you," said Allen languidly.

"Well, you can do quite as well for a thing like this," said Bobus, "or better, as far as looking the gentleman goes. In fact, I suspect as much classics as Mother Carey taught us at home would serve their

countships' turn. Here's the address. You had better write by the first post to-morrow, for one or two others are rising at it; but Bulstrode said he would wait to hear from you. Here's the letter with all the details."

"Thank you. You seem to take a good deal for granted," said Allen, not moving a finger towards the letter.

"You won't have it?"

"I have neither spirits nor inclination for turning bear leader, and it is not a position I wish to undertake."

"What position would you like?" cried Jock. "You could take that rifle you got for Algeria, and make the Magyars open their eyes. Seriously, Allen, it is the right thing at the right time. You know Miss Ogilvie always said the position was quite different for an English person among these foreigners."

"Who, like natives, are all the same nation," quietly observed Allen.

"For that matter," said Jock, "wasn't it in Hongarie that the beggar of low degree married the king's daughter? There's precedent for you, Ali!"

Allen had taken up the letter, and, after glancing it slightly over said—

"Thanks, Vice-principal, but I won't stand in the light of your other aspirants."

"What can you want better than this?" cried Jock. "By the time the law business is over, one

may look in vain for such a chance. It is a new country too, and you always said you wanted to know how those fellows with long-tailed names lived in private life."

Both brothers talked for an hour, till they hoped they had persuaded him that even for the most miserable and disappointed being on earth the Hungarian castle might prove an interesting variety, and they left him, at last, with the letter before him, undertaking to write and make further inquiries.

The next day, however, just as Jock was about to set forth, intending as far as might be to keep him up to the point, Bobus made his appearance, and scornfully held out an envelope. There was the letter, and therewith these words :—

"On consideration, I recur to my first conclusion, that this situation is out of the question. To say nothing of the injury to my health and nerves from agitation and suspense, rendering me totally unfit for drudgery and annoyance, I cannot feel it right to place myself in a situation equivalent to the abandonment of all hope. It is absurd to act as if we were reduced to abject poverty, and I will never place myself in the condition of a dependent. This season has so entirely knocked me up that I must at once have sea air, and by the time you receive this I shall be on my way to Ryde for a cruise in the *Petrel*."

"*His* health!" cried Bobus, his tone implying three notes, scarcely of admiration.

"Well, poor old Turk, he is rather seedy," said Jock. "Can't sleep, and has headaches! But 'tis a regular case of having put him to flight!"

"Well, I've done with him," said Bobus, "since there's a popular prejudice against flogging, especially one's elder brother. This is a delicate form of intimation that he intends doing the *dolce* at mother's expense."

"The poor old chap has been an ornamental appendage so long that he can't make up his mind to anything else," said Jock.

"He is no worse off than the rest of us," said Bobus.

"In age, if in nothing else."

"The more reason against throwing away a chance. The yacht too! I thought there was a Quixotic notion of not dipping into that Elf's money. I'm sure poor mother is pinching herself enough."

"I don't think Ali knows when he spends money more than when he spends air," returned Jock. "The *Petrel* can hardly cost as much in a month as I have seen him get through in a week, protesting all the while that he was living on absolutely nothing."

"I know. You may be proud to get him down Oxford Street under thirty shillings, and he never goes out in the evening much under half that."

"Yes, he told me selling my horses was shocking bad economy."

"Well, it was your own doing, having him up here," said Bobus.

"I wonder how he will go on when the money is really not there."

"Precisely the same," said Bobus ; "there's no cure for that sort of complaint. The only satisfaction is that we shall be out of sight of it."

"And a very poor one," sighed Jock, "when mother is left to bear the brunt."

"Mother can manage him much better than we can," said Bobus ; "besides, she is still a youngish woman, neither helpless nor destitute ; and as I always tell you, the greatest kindness we can do her is to look out for ourselves."

Bobus himself had done so effectually, for he was secure of a handsome salary, and his travelling expenses were to be paid, when, early in the next year, he was to go out with his Principal to confer on the Japanese the highest possible culture in science and literature without any bias in favour of Christianity, Buddhism, or any other sublime religion.

Meantime he was going home to make his preparations, and pack such portions of his museum as he thought would be unexampled in Japan. He had fulfilled his intention of only informing his mother after his application had been accepted ; and as it had been done by letter, he had avoided the sight of

the pain it gave her and the hearing of her remonstrances, all of which he had referred to her maternal dislike of his absence, rather than to his association with the Principal, a writer whose articles she kept out of reach of Armine and Barbara.

The matter had become irrevocable and beyond discussion, as he intended, before his return to Belforest, which he only notified by the post of the morning before he walked into luncheon. By that time it was a *fait accompli*, and there was nothing to be done but to enter on a lively discussion on the polite manners and customs of the two-sworded nation, and the wonderful volcanoes he hoped to explore.

Perhaps one reason that his notice was so short was that there might be the less time for Kencroft to be put on its guard. Thus, when, by accident of course, he strolled towards the lodge, he found his cousin Esther in the wood, with no guardians but the three youngest children, who had coaxed her, in spite of the heat, to bring them to the slopes of wood strawberries on their weekly half-holiday.

He had seen nothing, but had only been guided by the sound of voices to the top of the sloping wooded bank, where, under the shade of the oak-trees, looking over the tall spreading brackens, he beheld Essie in her pretty gipsy hat and holland dress, with all her bird-like daintiness, kneeling on the moss far below him, threading the scarlet beads on bents of grass, with the little ones round her.

"I heard a chattering," he said, as, descending through the fern, he met her dark eyes looking up like those of a startled fawn ; "so I came to see whether the rabbits had found tongues. How many more are there? No, thank you," as Edmund and Lina answered his greeting with an offer of very moist-looking fruit, and an ungrammatical

"Only us."

"Then *us* run away. They grow thick up that bank, and I've got a prize here for whoever keeps away longest. No, you shan't see what it is. Any one who comes asking questions will lose it. Run away, Lina, you'll miss your chance. No, no, Essie, you are not a competitor."

"I must, Robert ; indeed I must."

"Can't you spare me a moment when I am come down for my last farewell visit?"

"But you are not going for a good while yet."

"So you call it, but it will seem short enough. Did you ever hear of minutes seeming like diamond drops meted out, Essie?"

"But, you know, it is your own doing," said Essie.

"Yes, and why, Essie? Because misfortune has made such an exile as this the readiest mode of ceasing to be a burden to my mother."

"Papa said he was glad of it," said Esther, "and that you were quite right. But it is a terrible way off!"

"True! but there is one consideration that will make up to me for everything."

"That it is for Aunt Caroline!"

"Partly, but do you not know the hope which makes all work sweet to me?" And the look of his eyes, and his hand seeking hers, made her say,

"Oh don't, Robert, I mustn't."

"Nay, my queen, you were too duteous to hearken to me when I was rich and prosperous. I would not torment you then, I meant to be patient; but now I am poor and going into banishment, you will be generous and compassionate, and let me hear the one word that will make my exile sweet."

"I don't think I ought," said the poor child under her breath. "O, Robert, don't you know I ought not."

"Would you if that ugly cypher of an ought did not stand in the way?"

"Oh don't ask me, Robert; I don't know."

"But I do know, my queen," said he. "I know my little Essie better than she knows herself. I know her true heart is mine, only she dares not avow it to herself; and when hearts have so met, Esther, they owe one another a higher duty than the filial tie can impose."

"I never heard that before," she said, puzzled, but not angered.

"No, it is not a doctrine taught in schoolrooms, but it is true and universal for all that, and our fathers

and mothers acted on it in their day, and will give way to it now."

Esther had never been told all her father's objections to her cousin. Simple prohibition had seemed to her parents sufficient for the gentle, dutiful child. Bobus had always been very kind to her, and her heart went out enough to him in his trouble to make coldness impossible to her. Tears welled into her eyes with perplexity at the new theory, and she could only falter out—

"That doesn't seem right for me."

"Say one word and trust to me, and it shall be right. Yes, Esther, say the word, and in it I shall be strong to overcome everything, and win the consent you desire. Say only that, with it, you would love me."

"If?" said Esther.

It was an interrogative *if*, and she did not mean it for "the one word," but Bobus caught at it as all he wanted. He meant it for the fulcrum on which to rest the strong lever of his will, and before Esther could add any qualification, he was overwhelming her with thanks and assurances so fervent that she could interpose no more doubts, and yielded to the sweetness of being able to make any one so happy, above all the cousin whom most people thought so formidably clever.

Edmund interrupted them by rushing up, thus losing the prize, which was won by the last comer,

and proved to be a splendid *bonbon* ; but there was consolation for the others, since Bobus had laid in a supply as a means of securing peace.

He would fain have waited to rivet his chains before manifesting them, but he knew Essie too well to expect her to keep the interview a secret ; and he had no time to lose if, as he intended, though he had not told her so, he was to take her to Japan with him.

So he stormed the castle without delay, walked to Kencroft with the strawberry gatherers, found the Colonel superintending the watering of his garden, and, with effrontery of which Essie was unconscious, led her up, and announced their mutual love, as though secure of an ardent welcome.

He did, mayhap, expect to surprise something of the kind out of his slowly-moving uncle, but the only answer was a strongly accentuated "Indeed! I thought I had told you both that I would have none of this foolery. Esther, I am ashamed of you. Go in directly."

The girl repaired to her own room to weep floods of tears over her father's anger, and the disobedience that made itself apparent as soon as she was beyond the spell of that specious tongue. There were a few tears too for his disappointment ; but when her mother came up in great displeasure, the first words were—

"O, mamma, I could not help it!"

"You could not prevent his accosting you, but you might have prevented his giving all this trouble to papa. You know we should never allow it."

"Indeed I only said if!"

"You had no right to say anything. When a young lady knows a man is not to be encouraged, she should say nothing to give him an advantage. You could never expect us to let you go to a barbarous place at the other end of the world with a man of as good as no religion at all."

"He goes to church," said Essie, too simple to look beyond.

"Only here, to please his mother. My dear, you must put this out of your head. Even if he were very different, we should never let you marry a first cousin, and he knows it. It was very wrong in him to have spoken to you."

"Please don't let him do it again," said Esther, faintly.

"That's right, my dear," with a kiss of forgiveness. "I am sure you are too good a girl really to care for him."

"I wish he would not care for me," sighed poor Essie, wearily. "He always was so kind, and now they are in trouble I couldn't vex him."

"Oh, my dear, young men get over things of this sort half a dozen times in their lives."

Essie was not delighted with this mode of consolation, and when her mother tenderly smoothed back

her hair, and bade her bathe her face and dress for dinner, she clung to her and said—

“Don’t let me see him again.”

It was a wholesome dread, which Mrs. Brownlow encouraged, for both she and her husband were annoyed and perplexed by Robert’s cool reception of their refusal. He quietly declared that he could allow for their prejudices, and that it was merely a matter of time, and he was provokingly calm and secure, showing neither anger nor disappointment. He did not argue, but having once shown that his salary warranted his offer, that the climate was excellent, and that European civilisation prevailed, he treated his uncle and aunt as unreasonably prejudiced mortals, who would in time yield to his patient determination.

His mother was as much annoyed as they were, all the more because her sister-in-law could hardly credit her perfect innocence of Robert’s intentions, and was vexed at her wish to ascertain Esther’s feelings. This was not easy! the poor child was so unhappy and shamefaced, so shocked at her involuntary disobedience, and so grieved at the pain she had given. If Robert had been set before her with full consent of friends, she would have let her whole heart go out to him, loved him, and trusted him for ever, treating whatever opinions were unlike hers as manly idiosyncrasies beyond her power to fathom. But she was no Lydia Languish to need opposition as a

stimulus. It rather gave her tender and dutiful spirit a sense of shame, terror, and disobedience ; and she thankfully accepted the mandate that sent her on a visit to her married sister for as long as Bobus should remain at Belforest.

He did not show himself downcast, but was quietly assured that he should win her at last, only smiling at the useless precaution, and declaring himself willing to wait, and make a home for her.

But this matter had not tended to make his mother more at ease in her enforced stay at Belforest, which was becoming a kind of gilded prison.

END OF VOL. II.



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